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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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CHAMPIONS AGAIN: INDIA BAGS THIRD TITLE

Skipper Rohit shines with fiery fifty as India triumphs over Kiwis

DUBAI, 9 MARCH

Skipper Rohit Sharma led from the front with an excellent half-century as a resolute India held their nerve to win an unprecedented third Champions Trophy title with a four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the final here on Sunday.

Bowling first after Rohit lost his 12th straight toss, India's spinners restricted New Zealand to 251 for seven in the allotted 50 overs, with Kuldeep Yadav (2/40) and Varun Chakaravarthy (2/45) making significant contributions with the ball.

India completed the chase of 252 with six balls to spare after Rohit (76 off 83 balls) and Shreyas Iyer (48 off 62 balls) shone with the bat.

For New Zealand, Daryl Mitchell (63 off 101 balls), Michael Bracewell (53 not out off 40 balls), and Rachin Ravindra (37 off 29 balls) were the main contributors with the willow.

While chasing, India faced some anxious moments when they lost two wickets after being well paced at 183 for three after 38 years, but KL Rahul (34 not out off 33 balls) showed great composure to see his team through after Hardik Pandya's breezy 18-run knock.

India won the trophy without losing a match, reflecting their dominance.

India's previous title triumphs in the tournament came in 2002 and 2013. No other team has won the event thrice.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the Indian cricket team for winning the ICC Champions Trophy and said they have played wonderfully through the tournament. "An exceptional game and an exceptional result! Proud of our cricket team for bringing home the ICC Champions Trophy," Modi said in a post on X. —*PTI*

India's KL Rahul and R Jadeja celebrate after their win against New Zealand in the ICC Champions Trophy

BRIEF SCORES:

NEW ZEALAND: 251/7 in 50 overs (Daryl Mitchell 63, Michael Bracewell 53 not out, Rachin Ravindra 37; Kuldeep Yadav 2/40, Varun Chakaravarthy 2/45.

INDIA: 254/6 in 49 overs (Rohit Sharma 76, Shreyas Iyer 48; Mitchell Santner 2/46, Michael Bracewell 2/28).

TOURISM HIT

3rd accused held in Hampi gangrape and murder case

KOPPAL, 9 MARCH

The third accused in the gang rape and murder case in Koppal district has been arrested, Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi said on Sunday.

Two of the three men accused of assaulting five tourists and raping two women were arrested on Saturday. The third accused, Sharanu alias Sharanappa was arrested in Tamil Nadu on Sunday where he had fled after the crime.

They were involved in theft, eve- teasing and several others cases in Gangavathi rural police Station limits

"Three people were involved in this horrific crime, which should never have happened. Two were arrested yesterday, and the third was caught today," said Tangadagi, who is also the Koppal district in-charge minister.

Following the incident, several foreign tourists are leaving Hampi, raising concerns about safety and security in the historic site. The suspects arrested in have been identified as 21-year-old Mallesha alias Handi Mallesh and 21-year-old Sai Chetan, both residents of Sainagar in Gangavathi taluk, Koppal district, about 350kms from Bengaluru.

According to the Police, a five-member group one each from Israel and America nationalists had come to Hampi in Koppal district to attend a musical concert on Thursday. On the same day, after dinner, a 29-year-old homestay operator, along with the Israeli tourist and three male tourists, were sitting by the left bank of the Tungabhadra Canal near Sanapur Lake. Among the male tourists, one was from the United States, while the others were from Odisha and Maharashtra, police said. The group was approached by three men after which they started demanding money. When they were refused, the men were pushed into a canal, and one of their bodies was recovered on Saturday. While the male tourists were trying to stay afloat, the three men raped the two women. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON P2

2 killed as building collapses in Hassan

HASSAN, 9 MARCH

At least two people were killed, and several others are feared trapped after a dilapidated shop collapsed in Belur on Sunday afternoon, police said. Customers were inside the shop when the structure gave way, they said. Upon receiving information, police and fire and emergency services personnel rushed to the scene and launched a rescue operation. Two bodies have been recovered from the debris, while efforts are underway to rescue those feared trapped, they added. —*PTI*

Situation calm, but tense in Manipur

IMPHAL, 9 MARCH

Normal life was hit in Kuki-dominated areas of Manipur on Sunday as agitators enforced an indefinite shutdown called by Kuki-Zo groups against a "crackdown by security forces". The situation in violence-hit Kangpokpi district remained tense but calm on Sunday. No fresh violence has been reported so far. According to the police, the clashes began on Saturday when a mob started pelting a Manipur State Transport bus with stones bus along the Imphal-Kangpokpi-Senapati route, prompting security forces to use tear gas and minimum force to disperse the crowd. A protester was killed while over 40 others, including women and policemen, were injured the clashes on Saturday. Kuki protestors opposed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's directive allowing free movement across the state. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON P4

VP admitted to AIIMS; PM wishes speedy recovery

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the AIIMS in the national capital in the wee hours of Sunday after complaining of uneasiness and chest pain, sources said. Dhankhar, 73, was taken to the hospital around 2am and was admitted to the critical care unit (CCU) under Dr Rajiv Narang, head cardiology at AIIMS Delhi. The VP is stable and under observation, a source said, adding that a group of doctors is monitoring his condition. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited AIIMS on Sunday afternoon and inquired about Dhankhar's health. Union Health Minister JP Nadda also visited AIIMS to inquire about Dhankhar's health. —*PTI*

OVERWORKED & UNDERVALUED

IT workers protest against companies alleging they are made to work more hours and also on weekends, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Armed man shot at near White House

WASHINGTON, 9 MARCH

An armed man believed to be travelling from Indiana was shot by US Secret Service agents near the White House after a confrontation early Sunday, according to authorities.

No one else was injured in the shooting that happened around midnight about a block from the White House, according to a Secret Service statement. President Donald Trump was in Florida at the time of the shooting.

Secret Service received information from local police about an alleged 'suicidal individual' who was travelling from Indiana and found the man's car and a person matching his description nearby. "As officers approached, the individual brandished a firearm and an armed confrontation ensued, during which shots were fired by our personnel," the Secret Service said in a statement. The Metropolitan Police Department will investigate because the shooting involved law enforcement officers. A message left Sunday for the police department wasn't immediately returned. —*PTI* , ***>>>MORE ON P6***

Hindu temple vandalised in US with anti-India graffiti

NEW YORK/NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

A prominent Hindu temple in the United States was defaced with anti-India graffiti by unknown individuals, prompting a strong condemnation from India and a demand for "stringent action" against those involved in the incident.

Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) said that its Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills city of San Bernardino County faced desecration. Chino Hills borders Los Angeles County.

"In the face of another Mandir desecration, this time in Chino Hills, CA, the Hindu community stands steadfast against hate. Together with the community in Chino Hills and Southern California, we will never let hate take root," the BAPS Public Affairs posted on X.

"Our common humanity and faith will ensure that peace and compassion prevail," it said, without providing details of the incident.

India on Sunday strongly condemned the incident and called for adequate security to the places of worship in view of the incident.

"We have seen reports regarding the vandalism at a Hindu temple in Chino Hills, California. We condemn such despicable acts in the strongest terms," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal in New Delhi while responding to media queries on the incident.

"We call upon the local law enforcement authorities to take stringent action against those responsible for these acts, and also ensure adequate security to places of worship," he said.

"The Indian National Congress condemns in the strongest possible terms, the vandalism of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills, California," Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said in a post on X.

—*PTI*

India on Sunday strongly condemned the incident and called for adequate security to the places of worship ***PHOTO: X***

RELIEF FROM HEAT

Pre-monsoon showers likely this week

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Bengaluru and parts of South interior Karnataka are likely to receive pre-monsoon showers on 11 and 12 March, bringing some relief from the unusual heat experienced in recent weeks, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The rainfall is attributed to a weather system developing over Tamil Nadu, which could also trigger scattered rain in coastal Karnataka, particularly in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.

IMD's senior scientist CS Patil on Sunday said Bengaluru and other southern districts are expected to receive 30–40 per cent more pre-monsoon rain between March and May. The anticipated rainfall is expected to bring down daytime temperatures in the city, although densely populated areas may continue to experience the urban heat island effect. Coastal Karnataka and the Malnad region may witness an increase of 50–60 per cent rainfall, bringing temporary relief from summer heat.

However, the north interior Karnataka is expected to face severe heat wave conditions, with daytime temperatures likely to range between 43 and 45 degrees Celsius. The IMD has advised people living in these areas to be hydrated, avoid outdoor activities during peak hours and adopt protective measures to prevent heat-related illnesses.

The state health department has also urged people in north-eastern districts to remain cautious as high temperatures are expected to persist throughout March. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru is expected to receive 30–40% more pre-monsoon rain ***PHOTO: PTI***

- However, the north interior Karnataka is expected to face severe heat wave conditions, with daytime temperatures likely to range between 43 and 45 degrees Celsius

1 BODY RECOVERED IN TELANGANA TUNNEL COLLAPSE AFTER 15 DAYS

NAGARKURNOO, 9 MARCH

Rescue teams working inside the Srisailam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) Tunnel in Nagarkunool, which collapsed on 22 February, trapping eight workers, have recovered one body from the debris, officials said on Sunday.

The Kerala cadaver dog squad have been roped in to assist in the rescue efforts have found human remains inside the tunnel.

According to rescue officials, the deceased was found trapped in a machine inside the collapsed section of the tunnel.

"We found one dead body stuck in the machine, with only the hand visible. The rescue teams are currently cutting the machine to retrieve the stuck body," said the official. On Saturday, Telangana Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that robotic technology had been deployed to accelerate the ongoing rescue operations at the SLBC tunnel near Domalapenta in the Nagarkurnool district, where eight workers remain trapped. —*ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

Labourer killed after truck rams into canter

BENGALURU 9 MARCH

A 62-year-old labourer was killed in a road accident after a truck collided with a canter near T John College on NICE Road in the Hulimavu traffic police station limits early on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Murughan, a native of Erode, Tamil Nadu, who earned his living by loading and unloading goods from trucks. According to the police, the accident occurred around 5.30am when a canter was driving along the road opposite T John College. Murughan, who was asleep inside the canter, was thrown out of the vehicle due to the impact of the collision. *—Salar News*

Mother, son killed as car catches fire in Chintamani

CHINTAMANI, 9 MARCH

A tragic accident near Gopalli village under Chintamani rural police limits claimed the lives of a mother and her son, while three others sustained burn injuries after their car caught fire following a head-on collision with a private bus on Sunday morning. The accident occurred at around 9.30am when the victims, travelling from Madanapalle (Andhra Pradesh) to Bengaluru, collided with a speeding private bus heading from Bengaluru to Tirupati. The impact was so severe that the car caught fire instantly, killing Dhananjaya Reddy, 31, and his mother Kalavathi, 53, on the spot. Three others, who were seated in the back row, managed to escape with injuries and were immediately shifted to a hospital in Kolar for treatment. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

Congress to revamp women's cell for local polls

MYSURU, 9 MARCH

Sowmya Reddy, president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee's women's cell, announced plans for reorganisation of the cell in the coming days and preparations for upcoming local body elections. Speaking at the inauguration of a city and district Congress women cell meeting at the District Congress Bhavan, Reddy highlighted the implementation of five key initiatives aimed at women's empowerment. She urged party activists to ensure eligible women benefit from the Grihalakshmi scheme, asserting the critical role of women voters in the Congress's recent electoral successes in Mysuru. Reddy also remarked on the disparity in legislative representation, noting that although PM Modi pledged 33 per cent reservation for women by 2029, only 10 women were elected as MLAs in Assembly elections. The meeting also featured contributions from local leaders, including calls for recognition of women's service in the local body elections. *—Salar News*

Mysuru rly station bomb scare: Police confirm hoax

MYSURU, 9 MARCH

A security scare unfolded at Mysuru city railway station on Sunday after noon when an unidentified individual made a hoax bomb threat, prompting a swift response from railway and city police authorities. Fortunately, the threat proved to be a false alarm, and railway services remained unaffected. According to reports, the hoax caller, allegedly from Andhra Pradesh, claimed to have planted a bomb at the railway station on the instructions of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Despite a thorough investigation, no explosive device was found, and the threat was declared a hoax. *—Salar News*

Govt vows security at tourist spots after gangrape

He said Hampi incident is likely to affect tourism sector

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday assured that security measures at tourist destinations will be significantly strengthened in the wake of recent gangrape of a foreign national and a homestay owner at Hampi that has sparked public outrage.

The Minister also said, moving forward, tourists visiting Karnataka will be briefed on the dos and don'ts to ensure their safety.

"Definitely we are going to step up our security measures in places like Hampi and other tourist places," Parameshwara told reporters here.

He further mentioned that the government will reassess the existing security measures.

The Minister also noted that the gruesome incident is likely to affect the tourism sector.

"On the one hand we are trying to attract tourists from across the world while on the other incidents like this deter the tourists from visiting our country."

Home Minister G Parameshwara mentioned that the government will reassess the existing security measures PHOTO: PTI

According to Parameshwara, on the night of 6 March, two foreign nationals, including an Israeli citizen, along with two others, went out for stargazing on the banks of the Tungabhadra canal.

Three youths approached the group and asked for directions to a petrol pump. When the tourists expressed their unawareness, the youths robbed them.

- One of the tourists had a verbal altercation with the three men, later the men pushed the tourists into the canal. While two tourists from US and Maharashtra managed to stay afloat the body of the third tourist from Orissa was found later

One of the tourists had a verbal altercation with the three men, and in a fit of anger, the men pushed the tourists into the canal. While two tourists from US and Maharashtra managed to stay afloat the body of the third tourist from Orissa was found later.

The three accused allegedly gangraped two women. Parameshwara said adding two persons have been arrested so far in this connection and the Police was searching for the third accused. *—PTI*

Forest fire ravages 50 acres in MM Hills' Hanur taluk

MYSURU/BIDAR, 9 MARCH

A massive forest fire has reduced thousands of trees to ashes and damaged wildlife across around 50 acres in the Hanur Buffer Zone of the MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district.

The fire, which broke out near the Pacchedoddi and Beladakere forest areas on Saturday evening, initially spread across 20 acres before engulfing nearly 50 acres. The blaze posed a severe threat to wildlife, including Indian gaur, elephants, leopards, wild bears, and other animals that inhabit the Hanur Buffer Zone.

Speaking to reporters, Hanur Buffer Zone Range Forest Officer Praveen said his department swiftly took action to control the fire. With the help of local residents, forest staff, and firefighters, they managed to bring the blaze under control through continuous firefighting operations.

"Even though officials are taking preventive measures to stop such forest fires in the early morning, miscreants are setting fire to dry grass in the evening during peak summer to encourage fresh vegetation growth after the rains. These man-made fire disasters pose a serious threat to the department," he said.

- The fire, which broke out near the Pacchedoddi and Beladakere forest areas, initially spread across 20 acres before engulfing 50 acres

Meanwhile, in another incident a massive fire broke out in the Shahapur Research Forest Zone, near Bidar city, causing extensive damage to vegetation on Sunday. The fire, believed to have started accidentally, quickly spread, affecting large parts of the forest area.

Additionally, the blaze spread to haystacks stored by farmers in nearby fields, further damaging approximately 15 to 20 acres of land. The presence of trenches and wire fencing around the forest made firefighting efforts challenging for officials and local responders. *—Salar News*

Govt revokes appointment of corrupt doctor in Yadgir

YOHAN P HONNADI
YADGIR, 9 MARCH

The controversial appointment of a doctor facing criminal charges as the head of Shahapur Public Hospital has been revoked, following report by **Salar News.** The reports, published on 9 March, exposed the violation of official directives in appointing Dr Prabhulinga Mankar to the post of hospital administrator. It prompted District Health and Family Welfare Officer (DHO) Dr Mahesh Biradar to withdraw his order and issue a fresh directive.

The reports, published on 8 March, exposed the violation of official directives in appointing Prabhulinga Mankar PHOTO: SALAR

On 25 February Biradar appointed Mankar as the administrator of Shahapur Public Hospital, ignoring the commissioner's directive that officials facing Lokayukta cases should not be appointed to administrative positions.

The move sparked public outrage, with many questioning the DHO's decision, which appeared to be influenced by political pressure and financial motives. The unauthorized appointment led to widespread criticism, putting the health department under scrutiny. Mankar had previously served as the District Health and Family Welfare Officer but was suspended last year following a Lokayukta raid that uncovered assets disproportionate to his income. Despite this, he was reinstated and appointed to a crucial administrative post, raising serious ethical concerns.

It is learned that the Kalaburagi Divisional Director and Commissioner of the Health Department intervened, leading to the immediate withdrawal of the appointment order. *—Salar News*

Kodavas seek protection for actor Rashmika

MADIKERI, 9 MARCH

The Kodava community has urged authorities to provide security for actress Rashmika Mandanna following a controversial remark made by Congress MLA Ravi Kumar Gowda.

Karnataka Congress MLA Ravikumar Gowda Ganiga's statement that the actress "must be taught a lesson" has sparked concerns among the Kodava community, leading to a formal request for her protection.

While speaking to the media on 3 March, he said, "Rashmika Mandanna, who started her career with the Kannada movie Kirik Party in Karnataka, refused to attend the International Film Festival last year when we invited her. She said, 'I have my house in Hyderabad, I don't know where Karnataka is, and I don't have time. I can't come

A letter has been submitted to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Karnataka State Home Minister G Parameshwara, urging them to ensure the safety of Rashmika. *—PTI*

'OUR POLICE, OUR PRIDE'

Police personnel and volunteers participate in 'Our Police, Our Pride' run at Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru, promoting fitness and a drug-free society, on Sunday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Woman advocate ties the knot with Kolar farmer

KOLAR, 8 MARCH

PHOTO: SALAR

A Nalini Gowda, an educated woman and President of the District Women's Wing of the Ryot Sangha, has chosen to marry Nagaraja Gowda, a farmer, setting an example amidst the growing marriage crisis for young farmers in Kolar. The issue of eligible bachelors from the farming community struggling to find brides has been growing, with many parents favouring young men from more stable professions, such as IT or government jobs, over farmers.

Dhanjaya, a youth from Muduvathi village, petitioned former Chief Minister Kumaraswamy in 2022, urging him to address this issue and even suggesting a ban on inter-district marriages, as brides are increasingly marrying men from other districts who hold office jobs. The lack of a steady income and the risks associated with farming have made it difficult for farming youth to find alliances. As a result, even village girls now prefer marrying boys working in the IT sector or other professions with more lucrative salary packages.

In the face of this challenge, Nalini, a double-degree holder and practising advocate, has decided to marry a farmer. Her decision underscores the importance of supporting the agricultural sector and encouraging rural women to consider farming youth as potential life partners. *—Salar News*

Leopard, tiger attacks spark panic in Chamarajanagar

MYSURU, 9 MARCH

A leopard attacked and killed a calf in the early hours of Sunday at Mahanthalapura village, triggering panic among residents of Chamarajanagar taluk.

According to forest officials, Kamalamma, the owner of the calf, had tethered her cattle in the shed as usual, only to discover one of them dead the next morning.

In another incident, a tiger attacked and killed cattle in Kuruburahundi village of Gundlupet taluk. The tiger pounced on the cow while it was grazing in the fields. Villagers expressed their anger accusing officials of failing to prevent wild animal attacks. *—Salar News*

Greenpeace India activists slam 'unaffordable' Metro fares

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Greenpeace India activists are demanding a reversal of the recent Bengaluru metro fare hike, citing its disproportionate impact on low- and middle-income groups. A survey conducted by the organisation found that 72 per cent of respondents said their transport costs now exceed or equal their one-time meal expense.

The activists argue that the fare hike will lead to a decrease in metro ridership, which has already dropped by 13 per cent overall and 20 per cent in February alone. They also point out that the hike will disproportionately affect women, who rely more heavily on public transport.

PHOTO: ANI

Instead of increasing fares, Greenpeace India suggests that the government should prioritise affordable and sustainable public transport. They propose measures such as congestion charges and stricter parking policies to generate revenue while curbing excessive car use.

The activists have written to the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) demanding a rollback of the fare hike and calling for a dedicated metro fund with annual contributions from both state and national governments.

They urge the authorities to reconsider the fare hike and work towards providing affordable public transport for all. *—Salar News*

SPARKS OUTRAGE

'Budget fails to address needs of gender & sexual minority'

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The Movement for Gender and Sexual Pluralism has condemned the Karnataka government for failing to address the concerns of gender and sexual minorities in the 2025-26 state budget. Despite repeated appeals ahead of the budget session, the government's neglect of the community's welfare has sparked outrage.

Co-chairperson Vaishali Byali expressed deep disappointment over the government's inaction, stating that the community's key demands were ignored in the budget presented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on 7 March. "We held press conferences across ten districts and submitted our demands, but they were not addressed," she said.

Manohar Elavarthi, a state committee member, criticized the government for failing to fulfill its pre-poll promises. "The Congress had assured Rs 2 Lakh financial aid for entrepreneurship and a Rs 200crore significant annual budget for our development, but the allocated funds are grossly inadequate," he stated.

Kanta Devi, Co-Chairperson, accused the government of pushing gender minorities towards begging and sex work by failing to provide livelihood support. "The government is crushing our dignity," she said.

The forum demanded comprehensive support, including housing schemes, entrepreneurship assistance, free sex reassignment surgeries, job coaching, and a separate corporation with a dedicated annual budget. *—Salar News*

City consultancy firm dupes job seekers

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

At least five First Information Reports (FIRs) have been registered against the management of an immigration consultancy firm in the City for allegedly duping job aspirants out of lakhs of rupees under the pretext of securing them placements in foreign countries.

The accused—identified as Sharath, Rodriques Naveen, Aruna, and Gayathri—are managers of an immigration consultancy operating on Infantry Road. They allegedly promised high-paying jobs in countries like Poland but failed to deliver despite collecting large sums from applicants over the past three to four years.

According to sources, more than 20 people have reportedly fallen victim to the alleged scam. The consultancy advertised job openings for drivers, domestic help, assistants, store managers, and salespersons on social media, attracting several applicants. Victims claim they were assured job placements within six months after making payments ranging from Rs 1.7 lakh to Rs 2.9 lakh. However, none received either the promised jobs or refunds.

One of the victims, Bharath DS, a cab driver from J.P. Nagar, said he paid Rs 2.9 lakh in 2022 after being promised a driving job abroad.

Another victim, Shadakshari from Begur, claimed that when he demanded a refund, the consultancy staff allegedly threatened him. Similar allegations were made by Maqsood, a boxing trainer from Shivajinagar, and John Paul Prashant from Vasanth Nagar, who claimed to have lost Rs 2.3 lakh and Rs 1.7 lakh.. *—Salar News*

RTC staff, officers divided over strike call in State

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The proposed statewide strike by road transport corporation (RTC) employees in Karnataka on March 25 has triggered divisions among staff, officers, and administrative employees, leaving the workforce split over the protest call. The Joint Action Committee of Transport Employees' Unions has called for the strike, demanding a pay hike on par with other government employees and the immediate payment of 38 months' pending salary arrears from 2020. However, a large section of officers and administrative staff from all four state transport corporations—BMTC, KSRTC, KKRTC, and NWKRTC—have opposed the strike, citing public inconvenience. *—Salar News*

Pondy Budget session to commence today

PUDUCHERRY, 9 MARCH

The budget session of Puducherry Legislative Assembly will begin on 10 March with the customary address of Lt Governor K Kailashnathan. Assembly secretariat source said the session will begin at 9.30am. This will be the 6th session of the 15th Assembly. Chief Minister N Rangasamy, looking after the finance portfolio, will present the budget of the Union Territory for the fiscal 2025-26 on the floor of the House on 12 March, the source said. The Assembly has 30 elected members and three nominated legislators. *—PTI*

Ex-Odisha minister Das dies; Prez, CM pay tributes

BHUBANESWAR/ BALASORE, 9 MARCH

Former Odisha minister Ananta Das, 85, passed away in the early hours of Sunday due to age-related ailments, his family said. The former minister of higher education and industries was not keeping well for some time, and died at his government residence in Bhubaneswar around 3.40am, his son Biswajit Das said. President Droupadi Murmu, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and other leaders condoled the demise of the four-time MLA. Expressing grief over the demise of Ananta, BJD President and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik said he would be remembered for his work as a people's representative over a long period. BJD leader and MLA of Bhograi, Gautambudha Das, said "Bhograi has lost its stalwart leader. His contribution towards the all-round development of the area will be remembered forever." *—PTI*

MV Govindan elected CPI(M) state secretary

KOLLAM, 9 MARCH

The 24th conference of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) concluded on Sunday in Kollam, electing MV Govindan as the new state secretary. The conference also saw the formation of an 89-member state committee, which includes 17 new faces. A 17-member state secretariat was established, featuring prominent leaders such as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Finance Minister KN Balagopal, and former Health Minister KK Shailaja. New appointees to the state committee include Higher Education Minister R Bindu and Rajya Sabha MP John Britas. Govindan, a member of the CPI(M) polit bureau and a former MLA from Taliparamba, succeeds the late Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, who resigned due to health issues. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

UP MLA booked for domestic violence against wife

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Raghuraj Pratap Singh, commonly known as Raja Bhaiya, an MLA from Kunda in Uttar Pradesh, has been accused of domestic violence following a complaint from his wife, Bhanvi Singh. An FIR was lodged at the Safdarjung Enclave police station in Delhi on 7 March. In her complaint, Bhanvi detailed years of both physical and mental abuse and claimed the couple has been living separately for several years. She also alleged harassment by her in-laws, including her mother-in-law. Initially hesitant to pursue legal action in an effort to save her marriage, Bhanvi ultimately chose to report the matter as the alleged abuse persisted. A senior police officer confirmed that the FIR has been filed, and an investigation is currently underway. *—PTI*

Budget session set for 'EPIC' showdown over Waqf, Manipur

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind will join protests against the Waqf Bill on the 13th

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI 9 MARCH

The Parliament's Budget session resumes on Monday with indications of an 'EPIC' showdown between the government and the opposition which is planning to raise issues such as the alleged manipulation of electoral rolls, the Waqf Bill and the fresh bout of violence in Manipur.

Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to move a statutory resolution seeking Parliament approval for the proclamation of President's Rule while Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to table the budget for Manipur on Monday.

The opposition said it is set to corner the government over the issue of duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers. The Trinamool Congress has taken the lead in flagging the issue, following which the Election Commission declared that it would take corrective measures within the next three months.

For the government, the early passage of the Waqf Amendment Bill is a priority. A Joint Committee of Parliament submitted its report on the bill in the Lok Sabha amid vociferous protests by the opposition.

Shiv Sena (UBT) member Arvind Sawant accused the BJP of creating a Hindu-Muslim narrative **PHOTO: PTI**

Meanwhile, The Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind on Sunday extended support to the protest called by All India Muslim Personal Law Board and other organisations against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, claiming that Muslims are being forced to come out on the streets to reclaim their rights.

Supporting the protest at Jantar Mantar on 13 March, Jamiat chief Maulana Arshad Madani said Muslims are being forced out on the streets to reclaim their rights.

"When the concerns of Muslims regarding Waqf properties are being disregarded, and an unconstitutional law is being forcibly imposed, there remains no other option but to protest," Madani said in a statement.

Similarly, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant claimed the intention to amend the Waqf Act were to set a "Hindu-Muslim narrative" in the country.

In an interview to PTI, Sawant, who was a member of the Joint Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, also accused the parliamentary panel chief, BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, of adopting "deceptive practices".

"The intentions of the government are not good." The former Union Minister said. "The government is trying to set a Hindu-Muslim narrative and that it is here to protect the Hindus. You protect the interests of Hindus. We too are doing that. To protect the interest of Hindus does not mean (one has) to create hatred (towards) other people."

The second part of the Budget session will commence on 10 March and continue till 4 April. *—PTI*

'WON'T LOSE A SINGLE SEAT'

DMK MPs to raise delimitation matter in Parliament

CHENNAI, 9 MARCH

DMK MPs resolved to advocated against the Lok Sabha seats delimitation issue in Parliament, saying the population-based exercise will affect not just the southern states but also others including Odisha and West Bengal.

A meeting of DMK MPs, held under party president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, came on the eve of the resumption of the Parliament session.

The meeting passed resolutions, deciding to take up the delimitation issue in the Parliament.

The DMK has been insisting that the population-based delimitation of Lok Sabha seats will result in a decline in the existing number of seats for Tamil Nadu and wants the exercise to be done on the basis of the 1971 census.

The Centre has not given a "clear response" on the issue and was creating confusion, the MPs resolved and said Stalin has realised that Tamil Nadu and other southern states were being "penalised"

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin **PHOTO: PTI**

for effectively implementing population control measures.

"This meeting resolves to support CM Stalin in all his efforts in this issue and take it up in the Parliament and ensure Tamil Nadu does not lose a single Lok Sabha seat."

Further, the DMK MPs resolved to take efforts to garner support from political parties from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Odisha, West Bengal and Punjab-- all states that stand to lose LS seats post-delimitation during the parliamentary sessions. *—PTI*

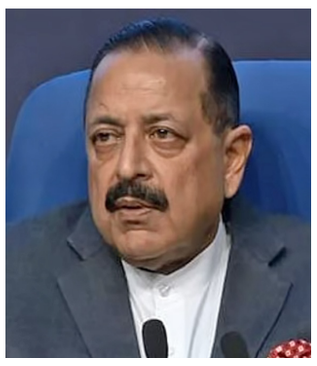
Terror angles suspected in Kathua civilian killings

JAMMU, 9 MARCH

Union Minister Jitendra Singh has highlighted the suspected involvement of terrorists in the recent killing of three civilians in Billawar tehsil, Kathua district, Jammu and Kashmir. The bodies of Varun Singh, 15, along with his uncles Yogesh Singh, 32, and Darshan Singh, 40, were discovered in Ishu nullah on Saturday, triggering protests and a shutdown.

Singh described the killings as a "deep conspiracy" aimed at destabilising the peaceful atmosphere of the region.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary expressed condolences and voiced concern over increasing crime rates. He also condemned the attack on Bani MLA Rameshwar Singh, who faced hostility from protesters when visiting the deceased's family.



Jitendra Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

Following the incident, Rameshwar Singh defended his actions, criticising the atmosphere of intimidation against those who voice support for victims regardless of their religion. Local BJP leader Gopal Krishan described the incident as a targeted attack by terrorists and urged intensified anti-terror operations.

BJP leader Sunil Sharma expressed outrage over the incident. "Terrorism has been buried in Kashmir and will not be allowed to raise its head in Jammu, " he said.

In response to the escalating tensions, the Congress party has called for a high-level investigation. *—PTI*

SUICIDE CASE

Late Kannur ADM not corrupt: Kerala minister

T'PURAM, 9 MARCH

Kerala's Revenue Minister K Rajan announced that the department concluded an internal investigation into the death of former Kannur Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Naveen Babu, finding no evidence of corruption against him. This inquiry was prompted by allegations made by former Kannur District Panchayat President PP Divya during Babu's farewell function.

K Rajan **PHOTO: X**

Rajan said a "fact-finding inquiry," confirmed that Babu was not involved in any corrupt practices or in deliberately delaying documentation. The findings were reviewed by both the Chief Minister and Rajan.

While the police continue their investigation into other elements of the case, Rajan noted that the Revenue Department's findings could assist law enforcement.

The family requested a CBI investigation into Babu's death. Divya, who allegedly made the accusations at Babu's send-off event, has since been arrested and released on bail. *—PTI*

INDIA'S CSW CREW TO BE LED BY DEVI

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Annapurna Devi will lead India's delegation at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The session will focus on global progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. According to the Women and Child Development Ministry, the Minister will deliver India's national statement at the Commission which will highlight the government's initiatives for the holistic development of women and girls under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. She will also participate in discussions on resourcing and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it said. As part of the high-level engagements, the Minister will be the guest of honour at a side event on 12 March, organised by the Indian government in collaboration with UN Women. The event will bring together global leaders, policymakers, and experts to discuss financial and digital empowerment strategies for women, the statement said. *—PTI*

Delhi: Gupta orders allocations for new MLAs

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta has instructed relevant departments to expedite the allocation of offices to newly-elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), allowing them to concentrate on constituency duties. Following the Assembly elections held in February, the constituency offices previously occupied by outgoing MLAs were vacated.

Vijender Gupta **PHOTO: PTI**

With the new MLAs having taken their oaths, the process of assigning offices has begun to facilitate smooth legislative and constituency-related activities, according to a statement from the Assembly Secretariat. Gupta emphasised, "Providing our elected representatives with the necessary resources to serve the people efficiently is our top priority."

The Assembly Secretariat has mandated concerned departments to fast-track the allocation process, taking into account the specific requirements and requests of the legislators.

The initiative aims to enable newly-elected MLAs to engage with their constituents effectively and address public concerns promptly, the statement added. *—PTI*

PoK organisation says Centre failed them

JAMMU, 9 MARCH

The SOS International, a leading body of displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), accused the BJP-led Centre of failing to ensure their proper rehabilitation.

"The unfortunate reality is that there is no concrete plan with the government to reclaim the PoK. Instead, this rhetoric is being pushed as a gimmick for elections," SOS International chairman Rajiv Chuni said in a statement.

He accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of exploiting the emotions of lakhs of displaced persons from PoK, 80 per cent of whom are living below the poverty line.

"The BJP is discussing reclamation of PoK while ignoring the hardships endured by those displaced due to Pakistani aggression in 1947 in Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Poonch districts," Chuni said.

Members of SOS International, an organisation for PoK displaced Persons **PHOTO: PTI**

He claimed that the BJP-led Centre is trying to shift the narrative to focus solely on reclaiming PoK, not for national interest but to win elections. Despite repeated pleas, Chuni said the government has failed to ensure proper rehabilitation of the displaced persons. *—PTI*

RUBISHES RUMOURS

No realignment with Nitish, says Tejashwi

PATNA/ KATIHAR 9 MARCH

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said realignment with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was not possible.

When he was asked whether there was a possibility of his joining hands with his former boss and the JD(U) chief ahead of assembly polls, Yadav shot back, "Why would we join hands? Why are you trying to divert attention from the issue at hand?"

Yadav, the former deputy CM, was addressing a press conference after a 'dharna' organised by the RJD over alleged "theft and eating up of reservations by the NDA".

There have been speculations that Kumar, who recently turned 74, was wary that the BJP might push for a leadership change and the RJD was ready to exploit the situation with an "offer" of realignment.

Yadav shot down the rumours. "There is no offer from anybody. In my party, only RJD president Lalu and I are authorised to take any decision on alliances."

LoP in the Bihar Assembly and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav addresses a press conference at the party office, in Patna **PHOTO: PTI**

The young leader underscored that Kumar was "no longer in his senses," recalling a couple of instances of Kumar trying to touch the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in public.

"The day may not be far when Kumar will be falling at the feet of his current deputies Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Choudhary," Yadav said.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Tariq Anwar accused the BJP-led NDA in Bihar with making "political use" of religious leaders like Acharya Dhirendra Shastri alias Bageshwar Baba ahead of the assembly polls.

The former Union minister said, "I have no problem with these religious leaders going anywhere. But, I wonder why they are made to always take the trouble of visiting poll-bound areas."

"It appears the NDA is making political use of these 'babas'," he alleged. *—PTI*

'Jai Shivaji' is response to BJP's 'Jai Shri Ram': Uddhav

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday accused the BJP of poisoning society and asked his supporters to respond to the ruling party's favoured 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan with 'Jai Shivaji' and 'Jai Bhavani'.

"If anyone says *Jai Shri Ram*, do not let the person leave without making sure that he says *Jai Shivaji* and *Jai Bhavani."* he said.

"The BJP has poisoned our society. I am going to give the BJP a tough time for what they have done to our society," Thackeray claimed.

Thackeray also questioned the BJP's commitment to the country, citing its stance on international sports events.

He said that while BJP leaders once opposed sporting events with Pakistan, India is now playing cricket matches with both Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Sena (UBT) chief also responded to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's recent jibe in the legislative assembly – "I am not Uddhav Thackeray to stay ongoing projects".

Thackeray, who held the CM's post for more than two years, said if Fadnavis wants to emulate him, he should announce loan waivers for farmers and allocate revised funds for initiatives like Shiv Bhojan and Ladki Bahin schemes in the budget, which is set to be presented on 10 March.

The Sena (UBT) leader claimed that he had halted certain projects during his tenure as CM and would have relocated the Metro 3 car shed to Kanjur Marg if he had remained in office longer. He alleged that the land is now being allocated to the Adani group.

The BJP and Thackeay's party were at loggerheads over the Mumbai Metro 3 car-shed site.

After the Thackeray-led MVA government collapsed in 2022 due to Eknath Shinde's rebellion and ensured the BJP's return to power, the new government decided to set up the Metro car shed at Aarey in the western suburbs. Thackeray wanted it to be built in Kanjur Marg on the eastern side. *—PTI*

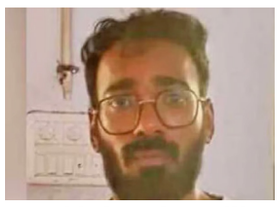


PHOTO: XXX

Malayalam film makeup artist held with hybrid ganja

IDUKKI 9 MARCH

A Malayalam movie makeup artist was arrested for allegedly possessing hybrid ganja at Moolamattom hill district. The accused, Renjith Gopinathan, known in the Malayalam film industry as RG Wayanadan, was taken into custody by Excise Inspector K Abhilash and his team during a special vehicle check. Forty-five grams of high-quality hybrid cannabis was recovered from his possession, according to Excise officials. Wayanadan, a resident of Kochi, has worked as a makeup artist in several Malayalam films, including 'Aavesham,' and 'Sookshmadarshini,' said a release by the Excise Department. The arrest was part of the Excise Department's 'Operation Clean State'. —*PTI*

4 die cleaning water tank in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

Four labourers suffocated to death while cleaning a water tank in an under-construction building in south Mumbai on Sunday, officials said. Four workers entered a water tank to clean it but passed out inside while doing the job, said a fire official. The incident occurred at Bismillah Space building located on Dimtimkar Road in the Nagpada area, they said. Others at the construction site alerted officials, who rescued the five men and rushed them to the state-run JJ hospital. However, doctors declared them dead on arrival. An accidental death report (ADR) was registered and a probe has begun to find out lapses, if any, on the part of those who hired the five and whether safety protocols were adhered to, a JJ police station official said. —*PTI*

Court denies bail for educational official in rape case

THANE, 9 MARCH

A Thane court has denied bail to Rameshchandra Shobnath Mishra, the chairman of an educational institute, who faces allegations of rape and sexual harassment. The Additional Sessions Judge, Suryakant S Shinde, stated there is substantial evidence against the accused, and the investigation is still in its early stages. Mishra was arrested on January 30 after the victim, who sought a teaching job, claimed he coerced her into a sexual relationship following demands for significant bribes. The defence argued the case stemmed from personal grudges and highlighted the accused's health issues; however, the prosecution noted similar allegations from multiple women. Judge Shinde emphasised the serious nature of the charges, deeming it inappropriate to grant bail at this time. —*PTI*

Goa man held with Rs 11.67 cr hydroponic weed

PANAJI, 9 MARCH

In a landmark operation, Goa police have apprehended a man in Guirim village, seizing 11.672 kilograms of hydroponic cannabis valued at Rs 11.67 crore, marking the largest drug seizure in the state's history. The arrest occurred on Saturday, with police confirming the individual has been charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant applauded the Crime Branch on X for their significant achievement, stating, "This is a testament to the relentless efforts of our law enforcement agencies in keeping our state drug-free." He reiterated the government's commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on drugs, promising enhanced intelligence and surveillance to combat such criminal activities. —*PTI*

Normal life hit in Manipur after clashes

Additional security forces deployed as Kuki-Zo groups announce indefinite shutdown

IMPHAL, 9 MARCH,

Normal life was hit in Kuki-dominated areas of Manipur on Sunday as agitators enforced an indefinite shutdown called by Kuki-Zo groups against a "crackdown by security forces".

The situation in violence-hit Kangpokpi district in Manipur remained tense but calm on Sunday. However, no fresh violence has been reported so far.

Additional security forces have been deployed in Gamghiphai and other parts of the district along the NH-2 (Imphal-Dimapur Road) and vehicular patrolling was being conducted to ensure law and order, a district official said.

A protester was killed while over 40 others, including women and policemen, were injured in clashes between Kuki demonstrators and security forces in different parts of Kangpokpi district on Saturday, officials said.

RAF personnel deployed at the War Cemetery entrance in Imphal, Saturday. They blocked the rally organised by the Federation of Civil Society (FOCS) **PHOTO: PTI**

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), a Kuki-Zo body, has extended support to the indefinite shutdown called by Kuki Zo Council (KZC) in all areas inhabited by the community in Manipur to protest the crackdown of security forces.

In a statement, ITLF said, "Yesterday, the Government of India's decision to allow the movement of Meiteis through Kuki-Zo areas led to agitation and protest in Kangpokpi. The security forces used excessive force on the protesters."

Endorsing the indefinite shutdown called in all Kuki-Zo areas, ITLF asked everyone to "adhere to the shutdown in solidarity".

"We respect everyone who came out to protest yesterday," the ITLF said.

Manipur police, in a statement, said 27 security personnel were injured in the attacks by protesters who pelted them with stones, and barricaded roads by putting up huge boulders, setting tyres on fire and felling trees.

"Due to heavy pelting of stones, use of catapults and random firing by armed miscreants from amongst the protesters, 27 security forces personnel suffered injuries, including two critical injuries," it said.

"The security forces showed tremendous restraint while trying to control the violent mob and used minimum force to counter the anti-social elements. During the skirmish, 16 protesters were reportedly injured and one protester succumbed to injuries," it said.

Clashes erupted between demonstrators and security forces in the Kuki-dominated district after police fired tear gas shells to disperse them. Kuki protestors opposed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's directive to allow free movement across the state.

According to the police, it began when a Manipur State Transport bus plied along the Imphal-Kangpokpi-Senapati route, a mob started pelting the vehicle with stones prompting security forces to use tear gas and minimum force to disperse the crowd.

Travel in the state has been affected since violence broke out in May 2023. —*PTI*

A boy picks puja offerings and other materials days after the conclusion of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

Report says water during Kumbh fit for bathing

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

A new report by the Central Pollution Control Board submitted to the National Green Tribunal said the water quality during the recently-concluded Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj was fit for bathing.

On 17 February, the CPCB had informed the tribunal through a report that various locations in Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh were not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing due to high level of faecal coliform.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report said, there was a "variability of data" in the samples collected from the same locations on different days and did not reflect the "overall river water quality throughout the river stretch", in the previous report.

The new report claimed an expert committee examined the issue of "variability in data" and said that "the data represents a snapshot of water quality at a specific location and time and may vary significantly depending upon factors".

"As a result, these values reflect water quality parameters at the exact time and place from where these water samples were collected, and may not fully represent the overall characteristics of the river, therefore, not necessarily reflecting the overall river water quality throughout the river stretch," it said.

The new report values of dissolved oxygen (DO), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and faecal coliform count (FC) for the samples taken within permissible limits.

At present, the matter has been posted for hearing on 7 April. —*PTI*

Minor boy raped by two, stabbed 40 times in UP

KANPUR, 9 MARCH

A minor boy was horrifyingly stabbed 40 times til death after being raped by two men in Makanpur, Uttar Pradesh, police said. The body of the boy was discovered in a well.

According to police reports, the boy was kidnapped by suspects Azhar and Hussaini. The motive behind this heinous act appears to be rooted in the suspects' frustration over their wives or girlfriends refusing physical relations during the holy month of Ramadan, police added.

The police were able to piece together the sequence of events after recovering the victim's mobile phone from a suspect during rigorous interrogation. The body was retrieved from the well and sent for postmortem examination after completion of the necessary legal formalities.

One accused has been apprehended, and law enforcement agencies are conducting further investigations to capture the remaining individuals involved.

The body of the boy was disposed off in a well. Police suspect sexual frustration during Ramadan as a possible motive **PHOTO: PTI**

"The police team took immediate action and detained some people," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police West, Shri Vijendra Dwivedi said.

"One accused has been arrested. Continuous raids are being conducted to arrest other accused. Soon the arrest will be made and legal action is being taken as per rules," he added. —*Agencies*

2 dead in Punjab factory collapse

LUDHIANA, 9 MARCH

A textile factory building in collapsed in Ludhiana, Punjab, resulting in the death of two workers on Saturday. One more worker is still trapped under the debris. Emergency services, including two teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), were conducting rescue operations.

Six workers were initially said to be trapped under the debris, with NDRF teams successfully extricating them, with two found dead, while three others sustained serious injuries.

Sources indicate that repair work was underway when a supporting pillar failed, leading to the disaster. —*PTI*

RG Kar doctor's mother seeks meeting with PM

KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

The mother of a junior doctor, who was raped and murdered at RG Kar Hospital, has expressed a desire to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek justice. Speaking on International Women's Day, the grieving mother raised concerns about women's safety in West Bengal.

"Our daughter had big dreams, and we never imagined she would perish in such a horrific manner. Seven months have passed since her death, and we are still waiting for justice. We don't even have a death certificate," she lamented.

Her daughter, who was 31 years old, was attacked at the state-run hospital in August 2022, sparking national outrage over safety standards for women. "If a woman doctor is unsafe at her workplace, where is the security?" she questioned.

In response, BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul indicated that there is a formal process to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister, who would likely consider their appeal.

Trinamool Congress leader and state Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya acknowledged the right to seek an audience with the PM, but highlighted that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee acted swiftly by ensuring the arrest of the suspect.

Sanjay Roy, a civic volunteer, was sentenced to life imprisonment on 20 January with both the CBI and state government appealing for a harsher punishment. — *PTI*

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

After Ranchi, bird flu outbreak hits Bokaro

BOKARO, 9 MARCH

A bird flu outbreak, attributed to the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, has been confirmed in Bokaro district, Jharkhand, following a similar incident in Ranchi last month that resulted in the culling of 5,500 birds. The central government notified Jharkhand's chief secretary on 7 March.

The source of the outbreak is a government poultry farm in Bokaro's Sector 12, where approximately 250 birds have already succumbed to the disease. Aiming to contain the virus, local authorities culled 46 birds and destroyed 506 eggs, .

Bokaro Animal Husbandry Officer Dr Manoj Mani confirmed that the farm has been sanitised, and the area within a 1-kilometre radius of the epicentre are designated as an affected zone, with plans for further culling. A surrounding 10-kilometre region has been established as a surveillance zone, prohibiting poultry sales and purchases.

Officials wearing protective kits to take away infected chickens amid rising cases of the bird flu, in Ranchi, Jharkhand **PHOTO: ANI**

Dr Anil Kumar Sinha, in charge of the farm, said the first bird deaths were on 20 February. —*PTI*

'ORCHESTRATED ATTACK'

Anti-India slogan: Teen had no interest in cricket

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

A 15-year-old boy and his family have come under fire in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district following allegations of anti-India slogans during an India-Pakistan cricket match. The complaint, lodged on 23 February, led to the arrest of the boy's parents, a scrap dealer and his wife.

The family, originally from Uttar Pradesh, asserts that the boy, who attends a madrasa, has little interest in cricket or sports. They allege that the incident was orchestrated by individuals intent on trapping the teenager. The boy recounted being confronted by men who forced him to declare a preference for the Indian side before claiming he made anti-India remarks, which led to violence at their home.

In the aftermath, the local authorities demolished the family's shop and residence, citing unauthorised structures.

The police said that no audio or video evidence substantiates the claims.

Local gram panchayats in the region have now begun restricting business operations for newcomers from other states in an effort to prevent further incidents. —*PTI*

Kerala: Missing girl found dead with neighbour

KASARAGOD, 9 MARCH

A 15-year-old girl who went missing nearly three weeks ago was found dead along with a 42-year-old neighbour, police said. Her parents had raised allegations against Pradeep, their neighbour, who had also gone missing around the same time.

The mobile phones of both were switched off. A 52 member police team, along with local residents, conducted an extensive search. The two were found hanging from a tree in an area close to the girl's house. The girl from Paivalike village had gone missing on 11 February. —*PTI*

70-HOUR WORK WEEK

People can't work after 8 hrs: Ex-WHO scientist

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

People should listen to their bodies and recognise when they need rest as prolonged overwork can lead to burnout and reduced efficiency, former WHO chief scientist and health ministry advisor Soumya Swaminathan said.

Asked about the impact of long working hours on human health, the former director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) told PTI: "I think it is an individual thing and your body tells you when you are tired, so then you also have to listen to your body. You can really work hard, let's say for a few months. During COVID, we all did that, right? But could we have continued that for years together? I am not sure."

She emphasised that mental well-being and rest are crucial for sustained performance.

"The human body has some needs for sleep, and mentally also, I feel that you need a break if you are going to be productive and if your thinking process has to be equal," she said.

Swaminathan said it is not just about the number of hours worked but the quality of work done in that time. "You can sit at your table for 12 hours, but maybe after eight hours, you are not doing that good quality work. So I think all those things also have to be looked at," she said.

Soumya Swaminathan **PHOTO: PTI**

Swaminathan stressed that productivity depends more on work quality than hours spent.

Earlier this year, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Chairman SN Subrahmanyan sparked a debate by saying employees should work 90 hours a week, including on Sundays. His comments echoed Infosys Co-founder Narayana Murthy's call for a 70-hour workweek. This month too, former Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said Indians need to work harder to make India a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047. —*PTI*

Dutta says case against Patekar still ongoing

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

Nana Patekar, Tanushree Dutta **PHOTO: X**

Actress Tanushree Dutta said her 'MeToo' case against costar Nana Patekar was still ongoing, dismissing reports that the court refused to take cognisance of her case.

Taking to Instagram, Dutta said the court refused the police's B Summary report, not the case. A B summary report is when police find an FIR to be false.

"Please do not believe any fake news! The false and malicious B Summary report was rejected by court, not my sexual harassment case against Nana Patekar." Dutta wrote.

On 8 March, reports said that a Mumbai court refused to take cognisance of the case because the case was filed by Dutta in 2018, nearly 10 years after the incident allegedly occurred. "There is no reason to take cognisance after a lapse of more than 7 years after the expiry of the period," the court was reported to have said. —*Agencies*

NESTING AFTER 33 YEARS

Endangered Olive Ridley turtles have reappeared at Eakakulanasi island in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Odisha for mass nesting after a gap of 33 years. After egg-laying, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the sea waters. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-50 days
PHOTO: X

100-day TB drive: ASHA workers battle stigma

Ranjana Chaudhary, a 28-year-old ASHA worker in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharthnagar visits six to seven houses in Madhubeniya village every day with the aim to eradicate the stigma behind Tuberculosis and encourage villagers to get screened for the disease.

Social stigma is still a major impediment due to which people do not readily come forward for testing for the deadly contagious air-borne disease.

Displaying the characteristic reluctance, 70-year-old Vimala Devi (name changed) who had come to camp for various ailments immediately gets defensive when asked if she had come for a TB check-up.

"No no, why should I have TB?" she said irritatingly.

Chaudhary and lakhs of ASHA workers in remote areas of the country face the daunting challenge of convincing people to attend tuberculosis screening camps and are mobilising vulnerable people to such camps under the ongoing pan India 100-Day Intensified Campaign to Eliminate TB.

Aimed at accelerating efforts towards eliminating Tuberculosis from the country, the government has been proactively screening and testing vulnerable populations such as diabetics, smokers, alcoholics, those who are malnourished, people living with HIV, individuals with a history of TB or COVID, the elderly and household contacts of TB patients.

Since the launch of the 100-day campaign in December last year, the TB programme has notified over 6.1 lakh TB patients across the country of which 4.3 lakh patients were diagnosed from the 455 intervention districts.

"Often we don't tell people that it is a TB screening camp and tell them to attend it saying a free health checkup camp is being held nearby. Even if detected for tuberculosis people generally prefer to keep it under wraps for fear of isolation and social stigma," Chaudhary said.

"By virtue of the fact that TB is a communicable disease, stigma is multifold. Especially if a woman is diagnosed with the disease, the family considers it as a curse and tries to hide it for fear of the girl remaining unmarried. Lots of families also try to keep it confidential thinking they would be ostracised from the community," said another ASHA worker Sunita.

Since launch of the 100-day campaign in December, TB programme has notified over 6.1 lakh TB patients across the country ***PHOTO: PTI***

Dr Shailendra Bhatnagar said TB is a very peculiar disease. If you do not get the right treatment at the right time you may infect other family members of the family and neighbours.

"If a TB-positive patient is not treated he or she can create 15 new patients in one year. Similarly further if this new lot of 15 new patients are not treated in the second year the figure becomes 225 and similarly the chain can go on and on," he explained.

Dr Bhatnagar stressed that as soon as one gets any of the symptoms, he or she should get tested. If found positive, the entire family is examined.

Contact tracing, which became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a terminology that has been used in TB programmes for several years now, Dr Bhatnagar informed.

It is being done with the intention that if one index patient gets Tuberculosis, his or her household members and the people they interact with on a routine basis in work areas or elsewhere are examined for signs of TB.

The household contacts are 10-60 times more at risk of getting the disease.

The identity of TB patients is not revealed to the public, and in several cases, the Ni-kshay Poshan kit is being delivered to their doorstep, he added.

To mitigate sigma, the national TB elimination programme has adopted a multi-pronged approach.

TB champions/TB Vijaetas ---persons who have overcome the deadly disease are being engaged and made ambassadors of awareness, counselling, and patient support.

They routinely support patients and their families by paying them house visits, guiding them through their treatment and nutrition requirements and helping them mitigate any stigma or misinformation about the disease.

They are also encouraged to talk about TB during their Panchayat meetings, monitor progress indicators of the program and support TB patients as Ni-kshay Mitras.

Since the launch of the campaign, around 12 lakh Ni-kshay Shivirs (TB screening camps) have been held across the country and 11 crore persons who are vulnerable to being affected by TB have been screened across the country.

Such mass mobilisation has been possible through different levers the National TB Elimination Programme has tapped into to combat stigma around TB and encourage early testing and screening.

Through the course of the campaign, over 27,000 elected representatives across different levels (union and state ministers, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, and Gram Pradhans), have been engaged to increase awareness, participate in Ni-kshay Shivirs and provide nutrition support to TB patients and their families through the Ni-kshay Mitra programme.

As part of the campaign, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare sensitised over 250 parliamentarians during the winter session of parliament, and the Union Health Minister JP Nadda, chaired meetings with Chief Ministers/LGs and Health Ministers of implementation states, encouraging them to actively monitor and participate in activities.

Subsequently, the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare chaired a joint strategy meeting with Union Ministers and Secretaries from 22 allied ministries to urge them to utilise their expertise and resources to support TB elimination activities during the campaign.

Additionally, community organisations, gram panchayats, schools, NGOs, and allied ministries have helped execute localised awareness campaigns that have helped dispel misinformation, myths and stigma around disease. *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Scientists: Climate change weakens La Niña's future impact

Climate change is growing stronger and more robust, and the cooling, counter effects of La Nina may not be effective in a warmer future, climate scientists said, assessing current heat trends seen in large parts of the country.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted an early summer this year, with above-normal temperatures and intense, long heatwave spells.

The country experienced its warmest February since 1901, with the fifth lowest rainfall since 2001, it said.

While human-caused climate change is increasingly driving a 'new normal' marked by a warmer winter and shorter spring, scientists also draw attention to the yearly changes in weather patterns, termed 'year-to-year variability'.

"For example, updates from the IMD this year suggest that it was an unusually dry winter," Arpita Mondal, associate professor at the Centre for Climate Studies at IIT Bombay, told PTI.

She explained that rain is a natural cooling process that helps bring temperatures down.

Raghu Murtugudde, an earth system scientist and professor at IIT Bombay, said, "I see a global wave of warm and cold temperature anomalies (deviations from expected patterns) during Dec-Feb that are related to the swings of jet streams."

Jet streams are strong winds blowing in the upper levels of the atmosphere and influence weather by shifting north and south.

Mondal said, "Our study finds that a northward shift in these winds during pre-monsoon is directly linked with heatwave character, such as its duration and temperature."

Further, El Nino and La Nina -- phases of the 'ENSO' natural climate driver -- also contribute to the overall trends, Vimal Mishra, chair professor of civil engineering at IIT Gandhinagar, said.

"So, under El Nino-like conditions, you will see warm springs or hot temperatures just after winter, whereas if La Nina prevails, you will find more number of cool or cold days," Mishra said.

Much of the world's weather is significantly influenced by the 'El Nino-Southern Oscillation' (ENSO), involving changes in temperatures and atmospheric pressures in the Pacific Ocean.

An ENSO cycle oscillates between the 'El Nino' -- warm phase linked with warmer ocean temperatures -- and its counterpart 'La Nina', transitioning each time via a neutral phase. A cycle typically lasts between 2-7 years.

This week, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) notified that the "weak" La Nina that emerged in December 2024 "is likely to be short-lived". The UN agency had predicted the La Nina a 60 per cent chance of emerging during July-September, following ENSO-neutral conditions that began in May 2024.

Further, temperatures during March 2024-February 2025 were 0.71 degrees Celsius above the 1990-2020 average, and 1.59 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service said this week.

Sea surface temperatures remained unusually high in many ocean basins and seas, it said.

Murtugudde said, "It's not really a La Niña at all. It has some cold waters in the tropical Pacific (Ocean), but in the critical eastern Pacific, some warm anomalies have persisted. And this only emerged at the end of the year, as opposed to peaking during December-February."

"The patterns are a bit unexpected, but likely related to the record warming of 2023 which is still continuing. We haven't really explained the level of warming yet," he added.

Studies have projected that in a warmer future, El Nino events are likely to become more common and intense, with every one in two of these being an extreme one.

The 2023-24 El Nino, one of the strongest five on record, is said to have fuelled rising temperatures and extreme weather events around the world in the period.

India experienced 536 heatwave days during summer 2024, the highest in 14 years, with the northwestern region seeing the warmest June since 1901, according to the IMD.

Mishra said, "The most robust, important signature is that of climate change. Therefore, even under ENSO-neutral conditions -- very much likely this year -- we cannot ignore harsh heatwaves, given that we have already started with quite warm temperatures in March."

In its update this week, the WMO has predicted a 60 per cent chance of ENSO-neutral conditions during March-May 2025.

Further, under climate change, "an El Nino will cause a lot of problems for us, but La Nina may not be able to provide comfort to us," Mishra added. *—PTI*

Studies have projected that in a warmer future, El Nino events are likely to become more common and intense, with every one in two of these being an extreme one ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

India shifts from institutions to family childcare despite hurdles

In the drought-prone villages in many parts of the country, seasonal migration forces families into impossible choices.

When parents leave for months to work in sugarcane fields, brick kilns or construction sites, they often take their children along.

But those who stay behind are left in the care of grandparents or older siblings, often facing emotional strain and the burden of household responsibilities.

For both groups, the consequences are stark: disrupted education, limited access to healthcare, and exposure to child labour and early marriage.

The UNICEF, in collaboration with district authorities and NGOs, is working to address this crisis through its 'Kinship and Community-Based Care Programme' in places like drought-prone Jalna in Maharashtra.

The initiative, which aims to keep children in their villages under the care of relatives or community members, is part of a broader shift in India's child protection system's move away from institutional care toward family-based solutions, such as strengthening the family to prevent separation of children, foster care, and kinship care.

According to official data, the number of children in non-institutional care, including sponsorship, foster care and aftercare, has increased four-fold between 2021-22 and 2023-24.

In 2021-22, 29,331 children were covered by non-institutional care. The numbers rose to 62,675 in 2022-23 and further to 1,21,861 in 2023-24.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development attributes this rise to initiatives under the Vatsalya Mission, which provides a monthly grant for sponsorship, foster care, and aftercare.

A recent national consultation held in Pune underscored the importance of family-based care for children and the reaffirming commitments.

Organised by UNICEF and other stakeholders, the consultation brought together representatives from the women and child development ministry, 18 state governments, NGOs, civil society organisations, global experts and academicians to discuss the alternatives to institutionalisation, strengthening families and the prevention of family separation.

Vandana Kandhari, child protection specialist at UNICEF India, who participated in the consultation, highlighted its significance.

The UNICEF, in collaboration with district authorities and NGOs, is working to address this crisis through its 'Kinship and Community-Based Care Programme' in places like drought-prone Jalna in Maharashtra ***PHOTO: X***

"The focus was on reaffirming the importance of family-based care, whether through kinship care, foster care, or aftercare services, for children leaving institutions," she told PTI.

Prabhat Kumar, a child protection specialist with UNICEF India, emphasised the legislative progress in this area.

He also highlighted the shift in focus from institutional care to family-based alternatives.

"Earlier, the focus was on institutional care at the top of the pyramid, with less emphasis on family-based alternative care and even less on the preservation of families, which we call the prevention of family separation," he told.

The shift toward non-institutional care is evident in the stories of families like Dashrat Tambe of Dudhpuri in Jalna.

Every year, Tambe's son and daughter-in-law migrate for work, taking their children along.

This year, however, Dashrath ensured that his granddaughter Shital, a bright student who recently won a district-level competition, stays back to avoid disruptions in her studies.

In Shevga, Shankar Gaikwad, a former migrant worker-turned-village sarpanch, is determined to break the cycle of migration.

He and his parents now care for their five nieces and nephews, ensuring they study in school while their parents migrate to work.

These case studies, shared by UNICEF, highlight the potential of kinship care to keep children in stable, familiar environments.

However, they also underscore the challenges families face, from financial strain to limited access to services.

Kandhari said for that there is a need to link these children to the welfare schemes of the government related to education, health, nutrition and protection services to limit the financial strain often faced, and the UNICEF is helping with that.

And foster care, though still ia nascent stage, is gaining traction in India.

Talking about foster care, Kandhari said it is a new concept because they're unrelated families. But it has started in India, with the women and child development ministry last year sharing new foster care guidelines with the states and Union Territories.

Kandhari also emphasised the importance of a cautious approach.

"Foster care is new, and we need to ensure that families and children are prepared for it. It's not just about placing children in homes; it's about providing ongoing support and monitoring," she said.

Highlighting the cultural context of India's child protection system, Kandhari said, "India has deep-rooted traditional care practices. Families often step in to care for children in distress. But with urbanisation, migration and climate change, these systems are under strain. We need to strengthen them, and not replace them with institutions."

She also highlighted the importance of mental health support for children and caregivers, a component now being piloted through the 'Manacha Katta' (Space for our Mind) initiative.

As India continues its shift from institutional care to family-based solutions, the focus remains on ensuring that no child is left behind.

"The return on investment is much higher when children grow up in families rather than in institutions. We must continue to build on this model, ensuring that no child is left behind," Kandhari said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gunmen kill religious scholar in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 9 MARCH

Mufti Shah Mir, a prominent Pakistani scholar, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Balochistan province, according to a media report. Mir was targeted in the Turbat town of Kech on Friday when he was leaving a mosque after night prayers, the Dawn newspaper said. "Armed men riding motorcycles opened fire on Mufti Shah Mir, leaving him seriously injured," the paper quoted police as saying. He was immediately shifted to Turbat hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. The deceased received multiple bullet injuries that caused his death. Mufti Shah Mir was close to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F). He previously survived two attempts on his life. The attack came days after two leaders of JUI-F were shot dead in Khuzdar. *—PTI*

Landslide in southwest Colombia kills 1

BOGOTA, 9 MARCH

Heavy rains unleashed a landslide in southwest Colombia, killing at least one person, officials said Saturday. Three other people were missing. The victim was dragged away in his vehicle by Friday's landslide, according to Nicolás Toro, mayor of the town of Pasto, who spoke with El Contraste Noticias, a local news site. Before the body was found on Saturday, the National Risk Management Unit had said that four people were missing and 38 others were rescued. It noted that the landslide affected more than 200 people overall and damaged 65 homes. Heavy machinery worked to reopen the affected roads and restore water service, which was suspended in a popular tourist area near La Cocha lagoon. *—PTI*

29 kidnapped law officers freed in Colombia

BOGOTA, 9 MARCH

Colombian Defence Minister Pedro Sánchez announced that 29 law enforcement officers recently kidnapped in the country's southwest region have been freed. The 28 police officers and one soldier had been kidnapped Thursday during a violent attack in the El Plateado region. Sánchez thanked a local community for acting as mediators and pushing for the group's release. The attack was blamed on supporters of the armed group known as Carlos Patiño, whose members are dissidents of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia who did not subscribe to a 2016 peace deal with the government. "Justice will do its thing," he wrote on the social media platform X. *—PTI*

Toronto pub shooting leaves 12 injured

TORONTO, 9 MARCH

A shocking incident occurred at a Toronto pub, leaving 12 people injured after a reckless shooting. Three men, armed with an assault rifle and handguns, entered the Piper Arms pub and opened fire indiscriminately on customers. According toSuperintendent Paul MacIntyre, the victims were "extremely lucky" to have survived the attack. Six people suffered gunshot wounds, while the remaining six were injured by flying glass and debris. The motive behind the shooting remains unclear, but MacIntyre condemned the act as "brazen and reckless". Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow assured that all necessary resources had been deployed to investigate the incident. A suspect, described as wearing a black balaclava, was seen fleeing in a silver car. Police warned people to stay away from the area. *—PTI*

SYRIA LOSES 1,000 LIVES IN 2 DAYS

Clashes, revenge killings make it one of the deadliest acts of violence in 14 years of conflict

BEIRUT, 9 MARCH

The death toll from two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and loyalists of ousted President Bashar Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 1,000, a war monitoring group said Saturday, making it one of the deadliest acts of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in addition to 745 civilians killed, mostly in shootings from close distance, 125 government security force members and 148 militants with armed groups affiliated with Assad were killed. It added that electricity and drinking water were cut off in large areas around the city of Latakia.

The clashes, which erupted Thursday, marked a major escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus, three months after insurgents took authority after removing Assad from power.

The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces *PHOTO: PTI*

The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence.

The revenge killings that started Friday by Sunni Muslim gunmen loyal to the government against members of Assad's minority Alawite sect are a major blow to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the faction that led the overthrow of the former government. Alawites made up a large part of Assad's support base for decades.

Residents of Alawite villages and towns spoke to The Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP from their hideouts.

They asked that their names not be made public out of fear of being killed by gunmen, adding that thousands of people have fled to nearby mountains for safety.

Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. *—PTI*

WHO ARE ALAWITES?

Before Syria's civil war erupted in 2011, Alawites were estimated to comprise between 10 per cent and 13 per cent of the country's total population. While often described as an offshoot of Shia Islam, their religious background is complex and distinct.

Alawi Islam traces its origins to the ninth century in northeastern Syria, a region influenced by diverse beliefs. Unlike orthodox Muslims, Alawites prefer private worship, often at home or in open spaces rather than congregational prayers in mosques. They also interpret the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca symbolically rather than as a mandatory physical journey. Other notable distinctions include their use of wine in rituals, the absence of a strict requirement for women to wear headscarves, and a belief system that incorporates elements of nature worship, including reverence for the sun, moon, and stars.

Despite these differences, Alawites share some common beliefs with Shiite Muslims. Notably, they hold the view that Ali ibn Abu Talib the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, the first leader of Shia muslims as divine.

Due to their unique religious beliefs, Alawites have faced persecution for centuries. From the time of the Christian Crusaders to the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the sect has endured repeated discrimination and marginalisation.

—Salar News

HUES OF PATRIOTISM

Tibetans living in Taiwan and their supporters hold national flags during a march on Sunday in Taipei, marking the 66th anniversary of the failed 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule *PHOTO: X*

ISRAEL EYES QATAR ROUTE FOR PEACE IN GAZA

DEIR AL-BALAH, 9 MARCH

Israel said that it would send a delegation to Qatar on Monday "in an effort to advance the negotiations" around the ceasefire in Gaza, while Hamas reported "positive signals" in talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on starting negotiations on the truce's delayed second phase.

The statement PM Benjamin Netanyahu gave no details except to say it had "accepted the invitation of US-backed mediators." Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua also gave no details. Talks on the second phase should have started a month ago.

There was no immediate comment from the White House, which on Wednesday made the surprise confirmation of direct US talks with Hamas.

Over the past week, Israel has pressed Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages in return for an extension of the first phase, which ended last weekend, and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Hamas is believed to have 24 living hostages and the bodies of 35 others. Israel last weekend cut off all supplies to Gaza and its more than 2 million people as it pressed Hamas to agree. *—PTI*

Russia uses pipeline to strike at Ukraine

KYIV, 9 MARCH

Russian special forces walked kms inside of a gas pipeline to strike Ukrainian units from the rear in the Kursk region, Ukraine's military and Russian war bloggers reported, as Moscow moves to recapture parts of its border province that Kyiv seized in a shock offensive.

Ukraine launched a daring cross-border incursion into Kursk i n August, in what marked the largest attack on Russian territory since World War II.

Within days, Ukrainian units had captured 1,000sqkms of territory, including the strategic border town of Sudzha, and taken hundreds of Russian prisoners of war.

According to Kyiv, the operation aimed to gain a bargaining chip in future peace talks, and force Russia to divert troops away from its grinding offensive in eastern Ukraine.

But months after Ukraine's thunder run, its soldiers in Kursk are weary and bloodied by relentless assaults of more than 50,000 troops, including some from Russia's ally North Korea. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers run the risk of being encircled, open source maps of the battlefield show.

Ukrainian firefighters put out the fire in Dobropillya *PHOTO: PTI*

According to Telegram posts by a Ukrainian-born, pro-Kremlin blogger, Russian operatives walked about 15kms inside the pipeline, which Moscow had until recently used to send gas to Europe. Some

The town had some 5,000 residents before the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and houses major gas transfer and measuring stations along the pipeline, once a major outlet for Russian natural gas exports through Ukrainian territory. *—PTI*

Trump is polygraphing employees to find leaks

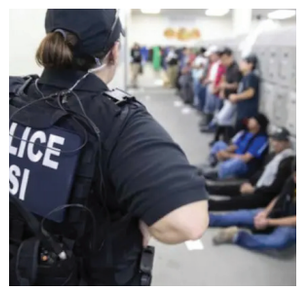
WASHINGTON, 9 MARCH

US President Donald Trump's Department of Homeland Security is reportedly performing polygraph tests on agency employees to determine whether staff is leaking information to the media about immigration enforcement operations.

Trump's border czar Tom Homan and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem have both repeatedly blamed lower-than-expected Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrests on alleged leaks to the press that have revealed which cities federal law enforcement officials were targeting.

On Friday, Noem said DHS has "identified two leakers of information" within the agency "who have been telling individuals about our operations and putting law enforcement lives in jeopardy."

"We plan to prosecute these two individuals and hold them accountable for



what they've done," she said in a video posted to X.

Noem cited the "deleterious effects" of leaks on immigration enforcement, according to the memo, which said responses could be used to determine whether agency personnel can continue to have access to classified information or hold a sensitive position.

Homeland Security previously estimated there were roughly 11 million people without legal status in the United States in 2022. Trump and White House officials have repeatedly said they intend to remove anyone living in the country without legal permission. *—Agencies*

DoJ puts curbs on Chrome sale

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) is still pushing to break up Google, according to a revised proposal filed with federal Judge Amit Mehta. As in its proposal last year, the DOJ says Google should be forced to sell its web browser, Google Chrome, and potentially Android, as punishment for being a monopolist, as Judge Mehta found last year, according to The New York Times. In its new filing, the DOJ calls Google "an economic goliath" that it says "has denied users of a basic American value—the ability to choose in the marketplace." *—Agencies*

US warns against travel close to India-Pak border

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 9 MARCH

The United States has issued an advisory cautioning against travel to the immediate vicinity of the India-Pakistan border and the Line of Control due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict and to the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The advisory states that people should "reconsider travel to Pakistan due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict".

It also cautions against travel to the immediate vicinity of the India-Pakistan border and the Line of Control due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict.

It said Pakistan's security environment remains fluid, sometimes changing with little or no notice. *—PTI*

Panama frees migrants in 'inhumane' prisons

PANAMA, 9 MARCH

Panama has released dozens of migrants who were detained after being deported from the US, following widespread human rights criticism. The migrants, mostly from Asian countries, were part of a deal between the Trump administration and Panama to speed up deportations.

The migrants were held in poor conditions at a remote camp near Panama's border with Colombia. They reported scarce food, sweltering heat, and aggressive authorities. Many were stripped of their phones and unable to access legal counsel.

Upon release, the migrants were given 30 days to leave Panama. However, many have nowhere to go, fearing persecution or violence in their home countries. Hayatullah Omagh, a 29-year-old from Afghanistan, said he cannot return home due to the Taliban's rule.

Human rights groups have condemned the treatment of these migrants, emphasizing their right to apply for asylum under international refugee law.

The situation highlights the challenges faced by those seeking refuge and the need for humane treatment and adequate support.

The migrants' release comes after Panama faced criticism for its treatment of deportees. ' *—PTI*

WITHOUT USAID FUNDS

Rohingyas in B'desh face food shortage

COX'S BAZAR, 9 MARCH

Rohingya refugees in crammed Bangladeshi camps say they are worried about a US decision to cut food rations by half beginning next month, while a refugee official says the reduction will impact the nutrition of more than 1 million refugees and create "social and mental pressure."

President Donald Trump abruptly stopped most foreign aid and dismantled the US Agency for International Development, which has significantly hampered the global humanitarian sector. Trump's 20 January executive order froze the funding for a 90-day review.

The World Food Programme, the main UN food agency, recently announced that cuts to food rations will take effect from April 1 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where dozens of camps are inhabited by Rohingya refugees.

In Bangladeshi refugee camps, mothers worry for their already malnourished children as food rations will be halved next month *PHOTO: X*

More than 700,000 Muslim Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar starting in late August 2017 when Myanmar's military launched a "clearance operation."

The ethnic group faces discrimination and are denied citizenship and other rights in the Buddhist-majority nation. Following a miliary takeover in 2021, the country has been engulfed in an armed conflict widely seen as civil war.

It was not immediately clear if the WFP's decision was directly related to the Trump administration's action.

"We received a letter that (says) previously it was $12.50, and now it is $6. They used to get $12.50 per month, and from now $6, this will greatly affect them," Shamsud Douza, additional refugee relief and repatriation commissioner of Bangladesh, told The Associated Press.

"As the food is cut, they will get less nutritious food, which may lead to a lack of nutrition. There will be social and mental pressure created amongst the Rohingya people in their community.

They will have to look for an alternative for the food," he said. *—PTI*

STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED AS FIRE RAGES ON IN LONG ISLAND

NEW YORK, 9 MARCH

New York Governor Kathy Hochul has declared a state of emergency as brush fires continued to burn along Sunrise Highway toward East End, Long Island

"This is still out of control at this moment," Hochul told local TV station News 12. "We're seeing people having to be evacuated from the Westhampton area," she said, adding that more evacuations may be needed.

Hochul said homes, a chemical factory and an Amazon warehouse were at risk.

Videos posted to social media showed flames shooting into the air and columns of black smoke rising above roads.

In a statement, Hochul said the national guard had been providing support by helicopter and working with local law enforcement.

"Public safety is my top priority, and I'm committed to doing everything possible to keep Long Islanders safe," she said. In her comments to News 12, Hochul declined to estimate the extent of the flames, saying only that they were growing rapidly. *—Agencies*

Wildfire sends terrified residents fleeing down a smoke-shrouded highway in Long Island *PHOTO: X*

Masoor Dal faces 10% duty, peas exempted

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The government has imposed a 10 per cent import duty on lentils (mosur) and extended the duty-free import of yellow peas by three months till May 31 this year to enhance domestic availability, according to a finance ministry notification. Through the notification, the government has imposed 5 per cent basic customs duty and 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on lentils with effect from 8 March. So far, the import of lentils has been exempt from duty. The government had initially allowed the duty-free import of yellow peas in 2023 and extended till 28 February. —*PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

'Nagpur Patanjali Food park to aid vidarbha farmers'

NAGPUR, 9 MARCH

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday said the new Patanjali Food and Herbal Park in Nagpur will come as a relief to cultivators in the Vidarbha region, which has witnessed several farmer suicide incidents. Gadkari and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the food park at Mihan in Nagpur. Patanjali Ayurved's co-founder Ramdev and its managing director Acharya Balkrishna were present on the occasion. Gadkari informed about initiatives taken by him for orange farmers in Vidarbha, on how to improve the fruit production and quality in the region as well as ensuring good price for the produce. Gadkari and Fadnavis thanked Ramdev and Balkrishna for starting the food park in Nagpur. —*PTI*

NCLAT rejects plea against Duncans Ind resolution

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Appellate tribunal NCLAT has set aside petitions against the NCLT order that approved the resolution plan for Duncans Industries. The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) also clarified that while approving the resolution plan for Duncans Industries, the NCLT has not made any observations regarding the "grant or non-grant of renewal of leases" of tea gardens. The Kolkata bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), on 18 October, 2024, approved the resolution plan filed by Uniglobal Papers, which was challenged by Merico Agro Industries and Nagri Farm Tea Co before the appellate tribunal. The corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against Duncans Industries was initiated on 5 March, 2020.—*PTI*

Granules Telangana plant under USFDA scrutiny

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The US health regulator has pulled up Granules India for failing to maintain buildings for drug storage and avoiding adequate procedures regarding cleaning and maintenance of equipment at its Telangana-based formulations plant. In a warning letter to the company's Chairman and Managing Director Krishna Prasad Chigurupati, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) stated that the company failed to establish and follow adequate written procedures for maintaining equipment at the Medchal-Malkajgiri-based manufacturing facility. "Our investigators observed significant contamination in multiple ducts of non-dedicated use in the preparation of finished drug products manufactured at your facility," the USFDA stated. The company failed to maintain buildings used in the manufacture, processing, packing, or holding of drug products in a good state of repair. —*PTI*

IPO activity slows down; no listings in weeks

This slowdown is reflected in the numbers, as only 5 firms went public in Jan and 4 in Feb

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

After heightened activity in 2024, there has been a slowdown in new listings, with no main-bourse IPOs hitting the market in the past three weeks due to a correction in the secondary market.

This slowdown in IPO activity is reflected in the numbers, as only five companies went public in January and four in February, compared to 16 listings in December 2024.

Quality Power Electrical Equipment Ltd was the recent IPO which opened for three-day bidding on 14 February. However, the trend of slower activity is evident as at least three companies – Advanced Sys-tek, SFC Environmental Technologies, and Viney Corporation – withdrew IPO plans by pulling their draft papers in January and February.

Investors have shifted focus to their existing portfolios rather than exploring new listings *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

This shift follows a remarkable 2024 in which 91 maiden public issues collectively raised Rs 1.6 lakh crore, driven by robust retail participation, a resilient economy, and booming private capital expenditure.

Bhavesh Shah, Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking at Equirus, told PTI that the slowdown is largely a result of the secondary market correction, especially in January and February, which negatively impacted the share prices of several listed companies.

As a result, investors have shifted focus to their existing portfolios rather than exploring new listings.

Shah emphasised that the diminished investor attention on new IPOs has contributed to the slowdown in market activity.

In the last two months alone, close to 30 companies have filed preliminary IPO papers with Sebi, and in addition, Knowledge Realty Trust--sponsored by Sattva Group and Blackstone-- last week filed documents to launch its maiden REIT public issue to raise more than Rs 6,200 crore. —*PTI*

Tata Capital to file IPO after merger nod with Tata Motors

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Financial services firm Tata Capital is likely to file preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise USD 2 billion (over Rs 17,000 crore) through an initial public offering (IPO) only after getting final approval from the NCLT for Tata Motors Finance merger with the company, according to sources.

At this size, the company is expected to be valued at around USD 11 billion, they said.

The proposed IPO would comprise 2.3 crore equity shares by way of a fresh issue and an offer of sale (OFS) by certain existing shareholders, according to a disclosure made to stock exchanges.

Apart from the IPO, Tata Capital announced plans to raise funds through a rights issue to further bolster its financial position before the public listing.

The move is part of the company's effort to comply with the RBI's listing requirements.

Apart from Tata Capital, another upper layer NBFC HDB Financial Services, owned by HDFC Bank, is also gearing up to launch its IPO. The company filed its draft papers in October to garner Rs 12,500 crore through the initial share sale. —*PTI*

India leads as London's top growth market

LONDON, 9 MARCH

The UK's capital city has unveiled an ambitious new 'Growth Plan' to provide an estimated 27 billion pounds extra tax revenue to fund vital public services in London and across the country, with India pegged as its number one source market in terms of foreign direct investment.

The plan, unveiled recently by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan along with growth agency London & Partners, aims to restore productivity growth to an average of 2 per cent a year in the next decade, which is hoped would make London's economy 107 billion pounds larger by 2035.

India has been on a growth curve for the last three years, overtaking the US as London's single-largest FDI source market in 2022-23 and continuing through 2023-24.

According to official data for 2023-24, London played host to 38,625 Indian students, reflecting a steep growth curve over the past 10 years with the country's share of all international students in London increasing from under 5 per cent.

Key drivers to deliver the plan's growth ambitions include a renewed focus on nurturing world-class talent, helping Londoners get the skills they need for productive careers, backing business innovation with new investment and technology.

The plan aims to achieve a 20 per cent rise in the household weekly income of the lowest earning 20 per cent of Londoners – which would mean more than a million London households would have an extra 50 pounds to spend each week. —*PTI*

RIL, TCS MAJOR WINNERS

Mcap of 7 of 10 firms jumps Rs 2.10 L cr

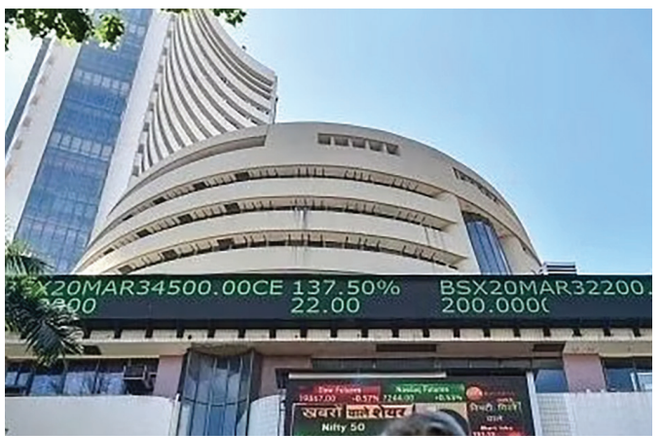
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The combined market valuation of seven of the top 10 most valued companies surged by Rs 2,10,254.96 crore last week, with Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the biggest gainers.

Last week, the BSE Sensex climbed 1,134.48 points or 1.55 per cent, and the NSE Nifty rose 427.8 points or 1.93 per cent.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries surged by Rs 66,985.25 crore to Rs 16,90,328.70 crore.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) market valuation climbed by Rs 46,094.44 crore to Rs 13,06,599.95 crore. With this sharp rise in its market valuation, TCS again rose to the second rank in the top-10 most-valued firms chart.



Last week, Sensex climbed 1,134 points & Nifty rose 427.8 pts *PHOTO: PTI*

The mcap of State Bank of India zoomed by Rs 39,714.56 crore to Rs 6,53,951.53 crore and that of Bharti Airtel advanced by Rs 35,276.3 crore to Rs 9,30,269.97 crore.

ITC's market valuation rallied by Rs 11,425.77 crore to Rs 5,05,293.34 crore and that of ICICI Bank surged Rs 7,939.13 crore to Rs 8,57,743.03 crore.

Hindustan Unilever added Rs 2,819.51 crore, taking its market capitalisation to Rs 5,17,802.92 crore.

However, the mcap of HDFC Bank plunged by Rs 31,832.92 crore to Rs 12,92,578.39 crore and Bajaj Finance's market valuation tanked by Rs 8,535.74 to Rs 5,20,981.25 crore.

The mcap of Infosys dipped by Rs 955.12 crore to Rs 7,00,047.10 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and ITC. —*PTI*

FHRAI urges delinking GST on food & drinks from room rates

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has urged for a separation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on food and beverage services from accommodation charges in hotels. The association argues that the current practice of linking taxation on food and beverage services to hotel room rates is both unjust and operationally burdensome for the hospitality sector.

Under the existing GST framework, hotels charging Rs 7,500 or more per room per day are required to impose an 18 per cent GST on food and beverage services, accompanied by input tax credit (ITC) benefits. Conversely, those with room rates below this threshold must charge 5 per cent GST without ITC.

- Under the existing GST framework, hotels charging Rs 7,500 or more per room per day are required to impose an 18 per cent GST on food and beverage services, accompanied by input tax credit

FHRAI has proposed a more flexible system, allowing all hotel restaurants the option to choose either the 18 per cent GST with ITC or the 5 per cent without ITC, irrespective of room rates. Pradeep Shetty, Vice President of FHRAI, highlighted the concern, stating, "The moment a hotel sells a room above Rs 7,500, the GST rate for the restaurant within the same hotel shifts from 5 per cent to 18 per cent." Additionally, the association suggested reviewing the Rs 7,500 threshold, recommending it be adjusted to Rs 12,500 in light of inflation since its introduction in 2017. —*PTI*

PepsiCo to double India revenue in 5 years

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

PepsiCo has set an ambitious goal to double its revenue in India within the next five years, as the country emerges as a vital "key anchor market," according to Jagrut Kotecha, CEO of PepsiCo India & South Asia. The multinational plans to make "aggressive" investments in expanding its operational capacity, expecting India to be a significant driver of its global growth.

Currently ranked among PepsiCo's top three global markets, India is witnessing double-digit growth in the food, snack, and beverage sectors. Kotecha noted that while the US remains a larger market due to its maturity, India's relatively low per capita consumption presents substantial growth potential. "We need to double that, dial that up, and start investing," he stated.

PepsiCo has already invested Rs 3,500-4,000 crore in recent years and plans to open additional facilities, including a new plant in southern India and one in Assam by year-end. The firm is also focused on sustainability, guided by its strategic pillars of "faster, stronger, better."

Despite competition from new entrants like Reliance's Campa Cola, Kotecha believes competition fosters category growth and helps transition consumers from unbranded to branded products. PepsiCo's portfolio in India includes popular brands such as Lays, Kurkure, and Tropicana. —*PTI*

NMDC workers protest amid wage talks

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

State-owned iron ore miner NMDC has reported that worker unions are staging protests, despite active negotiations regarding wage revisions. The company informed the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) that trade unions have initiated a "willful" slowdown of work and are adhering strictly to work-to-rule guidelines as of 6 March.

The last wage revision took place in 2017, with the next expected in 2022. Unions submitted their charter of demands on 27 February 2023. NMDC management responded quickly, reaching a preliminary consensus within eight months, and a bilateral sub-committee submitted recommendations in August 2024. An agreement has since been reached, pending confirmation from the steel ministry.

However, the ongoing strike has resulted in a significant 60% decline in production, jeopardising NMDC's annual target of 48 million tonnes for FY25. The company has expressed concern over potential negative impacts on its financial performance and urged unions to reconsider their actions. —*PTI*

India & EU to resume FTA talks amid tariff threats

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) bloc will start the tenth round of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement from Monday in Brussels amid Trump tariff threats, according to an official.

The talks are expected to focus on resolving remaining issues so that the agreement can be finalised by the end of this year.

During the recent visit of EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic, the two sides have discussed ways to accelerate efforts towards a balanced and mutually beneficial trade pact.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen last month agreed to conclude the ambitious India-EU free trade deal by this year amid fears of the Trump administration's threat of higher tariffs.

According to the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), key sticking points include agricultural tariffs, especially on dairy and wine import duties, automobile tariffs, and regulatory barriers affecting labour-intensive goods.

India exported USD 76 billion in goods and USD 30 billion in services to the EU, while the EU exported USD 61.5 billion to India. —*PTI*

Trends, macro data to drive mkts this week

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

Global trends, macroeconomic announcements and US tariff developments are expected to drive stock markets in a holiday-shortened week, analysts said.

Market participants will also closely track foreign investor activity, geopolitical tensions, and their impact on the US dollar and crude oil prices, they added.

"The upcoming trading week will be a holiday-shortened one, with market participants closely monitoring global developments in the absence of major domestic events. Key factors to watch include fresh updates on tariff negotiations, geopolitical tensions, and their impact on the movement of the US dollar and crude oil prices.

"Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have slowed their selling in cash markets, but any shift in their stance will remain a crucial indicator for market direction," Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking Ltd, said.

PHOTO:X

On the macroeconomic front, the release of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation data will be closely monitored, Mishra said.

Equity markets will remain closed on Friday for Holi.

This week, the CPI data from the US and India are scheduled to be released on March 12.

Last week, the BSE Sensex climbed 1,134.48 points or 1.55 per cent, and the NSE Nifty rose 427.8 points or 1.93 per cent.

According to analysts, the global sentiment improved following reports of a delay in U.S. tariffs and the possibility of further negotiations, which helped stabilise financial markets. —*PTI*

PRODUCTION TO COST HIGHER

US tariffs to hit pharma, minimal effect on auto sector

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Enhanced tariffs on pharma imports in the US can severely impact Indian drug manufacturers as it would lead to higher production costs, making shipments less competitive against products from other countries.

Smaller drug firms operating on thin margins can face severe pressure potentially forcing consolidation or closure.

The automobile sector, on the other hand, is expected to have a very minimal impact owing to the US being a small export market.

Terming India as a very high tariff nation, US President Donald Trump has said that reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies on American goods will kick in on April 2.

India currently levies around 10 per cent import duty on American drugs, while the US doesn't charge any import duty on Indian drugs.

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Arvind Sharma said as of recent history, the US has been a net importer of pharmaceutical products to meet its domestic demand.

Indian pharmaceutical companies supply a substantial proportion of drugs to US residents, with four out of ten of all prescriptions filled in the US in 2022 being supplied by Indian companies.

As per industry sources, overall, medicines from Indian companies provided USD 219 billion in savings to the US healthcare system in 2022 and a total of USD 1.3 trillion between 2013 and 2022.

Generics from Indian companies are expected to generate an additional USD 1.3 trillion in savings over the next five years.

By imposing tariffs, the US might inadvertently increase its domestic healthcare costs, burdening consumers and, in turn, making healthcare access scarcer, Sharma stated. —*PTI*

- Smaller drug firms operating on thin margins can face severe pressure, potentially forcing consolidation or closure

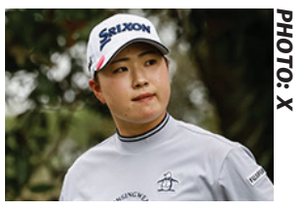


PHOTO: X

Takeda shoots blistering 64 for second LPGA title

SANYA, 9 MARCH

Rio Takeda shot a blistering 8-under 64 on Sunday to win the LPGA's Blue Bay tournament by six shots ahead of Minjee Lee of Australia, the second LPGA title for the young Japanese. The 21-year-old Takeda finished on 17-under 271 for the four rounds on China's southern island of Hainan. She opened with rounds of 69-69-69 before carding the 64. Lee closed with a 67 to finish on 277 with Japanese Ayaka Furue a further shot back after a 68 to finish on 10-under 278. Takeda won her first LPGA title four months ago, taking the Toto Japan Classic in a six-hole sudden-death playoff. Jeeno Thitikul, the LPGA's No. 2-ranked player, closed with a disappointing 74 and was 13 strokes off the pace. She finished on 4-under 284. *—PTI*

Morikawa birdies final hole for 1-shot lead at Bay Hill

ORLANDO, 9 MARCH

Collin Morikawa made a 12-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole Saturday on a baked-out Bay Hill course for a 5-under 67, giving him a one-shot lead in the Arnold Palmer Invitational and a chance to win for the first time in 17 months. Russell Henley holed a long bunker shot for a birdie on the opening hole, ran off four in a row to start the back nine, and had a 67 to finish one shot behind. Corey Conners of Canada missed the 18th fairway, chipped out, and made a bogey for a 69 and was two back.Even without much wind and with occasional cloud cover, the heat and three days of sun brought a yellow shine to fairways and greens.*—PTI*

Elshaddai powers East Bengal to fluent win

BHUBANESWAR, 9 MARCH

Ghanaian striker Elshaddai Acheampong ransacked the rival defence with a quick hat-trick as East Bengal FC defeated Odisha FC 3-1 in the Indian Women's League here on Sunday.Currently the table-toppers, the Kolkata side now have 18 points from seven matches. Odisha FC are placed third with 11 points from seven outings.East Bengal owe their victory largely to Elshaddai, who took the wind out of Odisha FC's sails by completing her hat trick in 38 minutes. Another Ghanaian, Jennifer Kankam Yeboah, found the target from an acute angle in the 74th minute to reduce the margin for Odisha FC. Elshaddai is a quality poacher and opportunistic striker, and her skills were on display early in the match even though defending champions Odisha FC were making the right noises near the East Bengal goalmouth.After Lynda Kom and Pyari Xaxa gave away the chances that came their way*—PTI*

NRAI conducts Electronic Scoring Target course

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), under its Education Programme, successfully conducted the second ISSF Electronic Scoring Target (EST) course at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Ranges here from 5-9 March. The course, the largest-ever conducted by the NRAI, drew 32 participants, including three from Nepal and one from Sri Lanka, marking the beginning of international participation in the federation's technical education initiatives. Following the success of the first ISSF EST Course held between February 24-28, NRAI continued to develop skilled technical officials proficient in handling EST systems.*—PTI*

WPL: Mumbai Indians take on in-form Gujarat

Team that tops the points will get a direct entry into final

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

With two games left in the league stage, Mumbai Indians will look to make the most of the opportunity and push for a first-place finish on the WPL points table, starting with the clash against in-form Gujarat Giants here on Monday.

UP Warriorz's win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru by 12 runs knocked the defending champions out from the race to the playoffs on Saturday, confirming the qualification for Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians, and Gujarat Giants.

However, what remains is the final classification of the points table. Harmanpreet Kaur's MI, who return to the Brabourne Stadium here for the final leg of the third WPL, their home ground where they had won the inaugural edition in 2023, will look for a top-place finish.

The team that tops the points table at the end of the league round will get a direct entry into the final, and MI, who play back-to-back matches on Monday and Tuesday, will aim to go past D,C who are currently at the first spot with 10 points and a Net Run Rate of 0.396. For MI, topping the table will also help them avoid a possible fourth game, which could test the squad to the hilt in the hot and humid conditions here.

Mumbai Indians players celebrate victory over UP Warriorz in the Women's Premier League match in Lucknow *PHOTO: BCCI*

Mumbai vs GG
Match starts at
7.30 pm IST

MI are currently third with 8 points and an NRR of 0.267, and if they win both these matches against GG and RCB, they can finish at the top with a maximum of 12 points.

The Giants, currently placed second with 8 points and an NRR of 0.334, can finish at best with 10 points, provided they beat Mumbai Indians, which would place them at an even keel with DC. In such a scenario, the NRR will determine how teams are placed on the points table.

The teams that finish second and third will meet in the Eliminator on Thursday, with the summit clash slated to be played on Saturday.

But it won't be an easy task to begin with for MI, as the Giants have been on a roll,l recording three heavy wins on the trot to make it to the final three.

Not only have the Giants' batters been firing in unison, but their bowlers have also found their rhythm, which makes them a team to beat in this knockout round.

A maiden appearance in the WPL playoffs would certainly inspire the Giants, who turned things around after a dismal start that had them losing three of their first four matches. *—PTI*

Wade joins Gujarat Titans support staff

The Gujarat Titans have named former Australia wicketkeeper Matthew Wade as the team's assistant coach ahead of the IPL 2025. Wade was with GT for two seasons as a player- in 2022 and 2024- but was not part of the IPL mega-auction following his retirement from international cricket. "Champion. Fighter. Now our Assistant Coach! Welcome back to the GT Dugout, Matthew Wade!" Gujarat Titans wrote on X. Wade, who had a short career of 15 matches in the IPL, played 12 of them for GT and was part of the title-winning squad in 2022 under Hardik Pandya's leadership.

Wade will join head coach Nehra, batting coach Parthiv Patel, and assistant coaches Aashish Kapoor*—PTI*

WOMEN'S AMATEUR ASIA-PACIFIC

Jeneath is first Malaysian to win WAAP

DA NANG, 9 MARCH

Jeneath Wong, who moved to Australia when she was ten years old and now plays at Pepperdine University in college golf in the United States, became the first Malaysian to win the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship.

Saanvi Somu was the best Indian golfer at tied 38th, while compatriots Guntas Kaur Sandhu and Mannat Brar finished way behind at the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship here on Sunday.

Somu, who cut for the second year running, shot her second straight 1-under par 70. With rounds of 72-74-70-70, she totalled 2-over for the week.

The 14-year-old debutant Sandhu, who impressed by becoming the youngest Indian to cut WAAP, had a tough final round with a 7-over 78 and was 9-over to finish 47th.

Her aggression and some good putting helped her pick up 14 birdies, the most among the Indians, but she was held back by lack of experience of playing in strong windy conditions.

She shot 78, and with cards of 67-76-73-78, she finished at 10-over and in 48th place.

She turned in a superb finish, which included a clutch par putt on the 16th, a perfect tee shot to within six inches on the 17th, and a great pitch for an 8-foot birdie on the 18th for a round of 68.

Jeneath Wong *PHOTO: X*

Wong, who now gets to play three Women's Majors and a host of other iconic events, totalled 18-under and won by one shot over Korea's Soomin Oh (66), who made a great charge with a bogey-free 66 but fell short in the face of a nerveless finish from Wong. Wong finished 18th in her only previous experience in 2022, when she also had a hole-in-one on the second day.

In the final round here in Vietnam, she almost had another one on the Par-3 17th, when her tee shot came inside six inches.

Three Koreans finished in top-four as Sumin Hong (68) was sole third. *—PTI*

Haryana wrestlers dominate in FC

JALANDHAR, 9 MARCH

Haryana dominated the 2025 Federation Cup (Senior) Wrestling Championships, claiming top honors in men's Greco-Roman, Freestyle, and Women's categories here on Sunday.

With five gold medals in Greco-Roman and one gold in the Women's category, Haryana also secured first place in the team rankings.

In the Greco-Roman category, Haryana bagged five gold, four silver, and one bronze.

Anil More led the charge by winning gold in the 55kg category, while Suraj clinched bronze in the 60kg weight class.

Gaurav and Sandeep followed suit, capturing gold in the 63kg and 67kg categories, respectively.

Sonu emerged victorious in 87kg, while Nithesh (97kg) completed their domination, bagging the fifth gold for them.

Kuldeep Malik (72kg), Aman (77kg), Prince (82kg), and Sanjeet (130kg) bagged the four silver medals for Haryana.

Haryana wrestlers dominate, and win many medals on the first day *PHOTO: PTI*

With their stellar performance, Haryana finished first in the Greco-Roman team rankings with 220 points, far ahead of second-placed UP (135 points) and Chandigarh (125).

Haryana's dominance wasn't limited to Greco-Roman wrestling.

In Women's Wrestling, Haryana wrestlers again displayed their skill and determination, securing the top spot in the team standings with 203 points.

Harshita won the gold in the 72kg category, while Simran added bronze in the 76kg category.

Pushpa and Muskan secured silver medals in the 57kg and 65kg weight classes, respectively, further swelling Haryana's medal haul. *—PTI*

INDIAN WELLS 2025

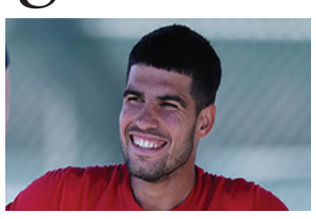
Djokovic's shocking exit & Sabalenka's strong win

INDIAN WELLS, 9 MARCH

Despite a strong start in the second set, Djokovic ultimately fell 6-2, 3-6, 6-1. This marks his earliest exit since losing to another lucky loser in the third round last year.

Djokovic's 37 unforced errors played a significant role in his defeat. Van de Zandschulp has now secured his eighth victory over a top-10 opponent, earning back-to-back ATP victories for the first time this year.

In the Women's category, World number 1 Aryna Sabalenka began her 2025 BNP Paribas Open campaign with a victory over McCartney Kessler, winning 7-6 (4), 6-3. After a challenging Middle East Swing, Sabalenka relied on a strong serving performance to advance to the third round. Kessler, a rising American star, put up a strong fight, but Sabalenka's resilience and determination saw her through. She will face unseeded Italian Lucia Bronzetti in the next round.



Djokovic, Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz *PHOTO: X*

Carlos Alcaraz sets eyes on title defence with a bang

Two-time BNP Paribas Open champion Carlos Alcaraz kicked off his quest for a third straight Indian Wells title with aplomb on Saturday, knocking out Quentin Halys, 6-4, 6-2, to reach the third round.

The former world No. 1 and No. 2 seed has now won his last 13 matches at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden as he looks to win his first Masters 1000 title in a year, easing past the unseeded Frenchman in 67 minutes on Court 1.

Still just 21 years old, Alcaraz has enjoyed a solid, if unspectacular start to his 2025 season, winning a 17th ATP title in Rotterdam but suffering quarterfinal defeats at the Australian Open and the Qatar ExxonMobil Open to Novak Djokovic and Jiri Lehecka, respectively. *—PTI*

Mohammedan looks to end debut season on a high

KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

It has been a season of harsh reality checks for Mohammedan Sporting, as the bottom-placed side will look to end on a positive note when it faces Punjab FC in its last Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 match in Kolkata on Monday.

Promoted to the ISL this season, Mohammedan Sporting found the top-tier league to be a difficult pitch altogether. Its last victory came on January 11, a hard-fought 1-0 result against Bengaluru FC. Since then, the Black Panthers have endured an eight-match winless streak, leaving them at the bottom of the 13-team standings with just two wins, six draws, and 15 losses. With 12 points from 23 matches, the team has struggled to adapt, but each setback has been a learning experience for the club that became the third team from Kolkata to enter the ISL after promotion from the I-League. *—PTI*

PHOTO: TWITTER

Kashmir see off Aizawl 2-1 to close gap at top

SRINAGAR, 9 MARCH

Real Kashmir FC moved to third spot in the I-League standings with a hard-fought 2-1 win over relegation-battling Aizawl FC at the TRC Turf Ground here on Sunday.

Real Kashmir's fifth straight home win, and fourth in the last five overall, took their tally to 32 points in 18 matches, two behind both Churchill Brothers and Inter Kashi.

With just four matches to go, the title race is set to go down to the wire. On the other hand, Aizawl missed the chance to climb out of the relegation zone. The Reds remained in 11th place with 16 points, one behind SC Bengaluru.

Senegalese Karim Samb (31st minute) put the Snow Leopards ahead before Lalrinzuala (58th) equalized for Aizawl with his ninth goal of the season. Brazilian Paulo Cézar (77th), who came on as a substitute, scored the winning goal for the hosts, who also saved a penalty late on to grab all three points. It was an end-to-end start, with both goalkeepers making some routine saves in the early minutes. Gradually, Real Kashmir began to boss possession and took the game to the visitors. In the 21st minute, Aizawl almost scored an own goal as Samuel Lalmuanpuia, intending to clear an Ocran Idan corner, flicked a header that went just wide of the far post. *—PTI*

Real Kashmir FC moved to third spot after a 2-1 win over relegation-battling Aizawl FC at the TRC Turf Ground *PHOTO: PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bayern and Leverkusen lose in Bundesliga

BERLIN, 9 MARCH

Bundesliga leader Bayern Munich squandered a two-goal lead and lost at home to struggling Bochum 3-2 on Saturday, but Bayer Leverkusen was unable to take advantage.

Leverkusen lost 2-0 at home to Werder Bremen, a team that lost its previous five games across all competitions.

The Champions League weighed heavily across the league on a day of upsets.

Borussia Dortmund lost at home to Augsburg 1-0, leading to a chorus of whistles from home fans before the "Black and Yellows" go to Lille for the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Wednesday. The teams drew the first leg 1-1 last Tuesday.

Also, Stuttgart was held to 2-2 by Holstein Kiel, and Wolfsburg drew with St. Pauli 1-1.

Freiburg drew with Leipzig 0-0 in the late game, denting their hopes of Champions League qualification. Both needed a win to keep pace with Mainz, which won Friday to boost its qualification prospects. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Unbeaten PSG moves 16 points clear after Marseille's loss

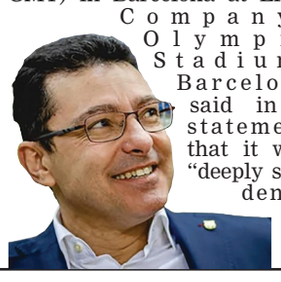
PHOTO: X

Ousmane Dembélé came off the bench to score twice and help a shaky Paris Saint-Germain win 4-1 at Rennes on Saturday to stay unbeaten in Ligue 1. Bradley Barcola got one goal and set up another as PSG moved 16 points ahead of second-placed Marseille, which conceded a stoppage-time goal in a 1-0 home defeat to Lens in the late game. Third-placed Nice can move level on points with Marseille if it beats Lyon at home on Sunday. PSG coach Luis Enrique rested captain Marquinhos ahead of the return leg at Liverpool in the last 16 of the Champions League next Tuesday.

Barcelona's game postponed after team doctor's death

BARCELONA, 9 MARCH

Barcelona's home game against Osasuna in the Spanish league was postponed on Saturday after the death of first-team doctor Carles Miñarro Garcia. Fans were informed of the decision around 15 minutes before the game was scheduled to kick off at 9 p.m. local time (2000 GMT) in Barcelona at Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium. Barcelona said in a statement that it was "deeply saddened to announce the passing of first-team doctor Carles Miñarro Garcia this evening" and extended its "heartfelt condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time." Barcelona did not immediately provide any details on the cause of death, which local media reports said was due to medical reasons.



"I can't believe it," Barcelona defender Ronald Araújo wrote on X. "Rest in peace, Doc." The 50-year-old Miñarro Garcia joined the medical staff of Barcelona's first team last season after having previously worked with its futsal team. Osasuna said it agreed to the request by Barcelona to postpone the match. The Spanish soccer federation confirmed that the decision was official. *—PTI*